

**THE
SHADOW
OF
EVIL**

CHARLES J. DUTTON





THE SHADOW OF EVIL

Books by

CHARLES J. DUTTON

THE UNDERWOOD MYSTERY
OUT OF THE DARKNESS
THE SHADOW ON THE GLASS
THE HOUSE BY THE ROAD
THE SECOND BULLET
FLYING CLUES
THE CROOKED CROSS
THE CLUTCHING HAND
STREAKED WITH CRIMSON
THE SHADOW OF EVIL

THE SHADOW + OF EVIL +

A DETECTIVE STORY BY
CHARLES J. DUTTON

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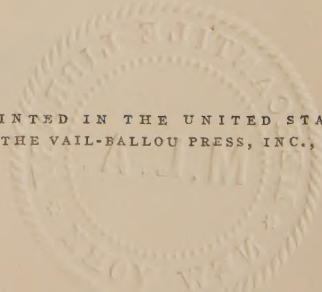
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THE SHADOW OF EVIL

CHAPTER I

ALL afternoon the wind had been blowing across the lake. With the coming of darkness it had increased in violence. In short sudden gusts it came howling and shrieking over the water, wind which hurled the rain before it in blinding sheets of drenching spray, rain which danced over a darkened lawn and beat with a steady patter against the sides of a long white house.

Slumped down in his chair, Harley Manners tried to read, an effort which was not very successful. Again and again the book would drop to his knees and with half closed eyes he would listen to the storm. Every time the windows clattered he thanked his stars he did not have to go out. It had rained for a week and he had an idea it might rain much longer. He had been at his summer home only eight days. The storm started the day after his arrival. Already he regretted that instead of his usual trip to Europe he had decided to pass the summer vacation at his old home.

Dropping the book upon the desk by his side, the searching fingers found his pipe and tobacco. When the pipe was lighted he rose to stand for a moment by the chair. Then, crossing the floor, he drew aside the long draperies at the window and looked through the rain-stained glass at the night.

After all there was little to see. He could make out the vague lawn, which stretched, a black shadow, to

the water's edge. Though the waves, pounding and beating upon the shore, could be heard, yet it was impossible to glimpse the lake. It lay a black dense curtain of gloom which his eyes could not pierce. Only the momentary flash from the lighthouse, twenty miles down the shore, broke the darkness.

For a while, with his face pressed close against the glass, the tall lanky young man stood peering out at the night. Flung by the heavy wind, the rain dashed in blinding sheets across the window. Out in the yard trees were swaying and bending, shadowy black outlines against the gloom. Above the rain and the wind the faint dull roaring of the waves drifted to his ears.

The longer he gazed out at the darkness the more depressed he became. A black dog was running through his brain, and he felt very lonesome. For a week now he had been kept close to the house by the rain. He was tired of himself, weary of the never ending rain and wind. So far as feelings were concerned, he was alone in a wet world, a world in which darkness and storm had become wedded.

Turning he stood for a moment to look over the room. Before the old farmhouse had been made over into a summer home, the first floor had consisted of four rooms. When the place was remodeled, this space had been made into a large living room. Manners enjoyed the room as a rule. Forty feet in length it was, with tall, built-in bookcases covering one side, cases filled to overflowing with books whose covers were a vivid contrast of colors. Above them, scores of gay colored prints mingled with black and white etchings,

vivid pictures of a day long dead, prints and etchings collected during his many visits to London and Paris.

For a while the long rows of books held his attention. The gaze was rather sober, as though he were seeing them for the first time. Their contents he knew by heart. Books upon the strange and curious bypaths of the human mind were flanked by others which told of the weird customs of obscure races, long rows of volumes upon psychology and history, and, above all, the collection he had been making the past few years, a collection dealing with crime.

There were many of Manners' friends who could not understand why he should collect books upon crime. A famous university boasted a good deal over the fact that its faculty list contained his name. Many scholars, when they mentioned him, added that he was the leading authority upon abnormal psychology in the country. But his friends could not understand his great interest in crime, just as they were unable to understand many other things about him.

That he should spend his time in such a dreary thing as teaching was the most surprising thing to his friends. He had money enough to live a life of leisure, if he had cared to do so, but such a life did not suit him. Manners had been born with a curiosity about everything, but especially about the habits of human beings. This curiosity resulted in his being recognized, at the age of thirty-five, as one of the leading experts of the country in his chosen field.

Crime had interested him for years. Every book dealing with the odd and curious bypaths of human

conduct, all accounts of famous crimes and trials, sooner or later found a resting place upon his shelves. As he glanced across the room he could see the volumes standing in long orderly rows against the wall. But to-night they held nothing of interest.

Walking over to the desk, he dropped down in the chair and relighted the pipe which had gone out. The dog, who had been asleep in a corner, stirred to attention, and slowly stretched. Then, rising to his feet, the big Airedale walked over to his master's side and placed his brown, heavy head in the man's lap.

Two years previous, Manners had decided to make an experiment. He wanted to know just how far one might go with a dog, if one were willing to spend hours in training the animal. About the time he became interested in the question of animal intelligence, he had read an item in the paper. In the West a man was breeding a new type of Airedale, producing a dog half again as large as the usual breed, standing much higher and weighing from twenty to thirty pounds more. As a result of reading the item, he had secured one of the dogs. After the first look at the trembling brown bit of energy, he had called it Satan.

It had been an interesting experiment, though he was still much at sea regarding the dog's intelligence. There were at least a hundred words which the animal knew—words he could recognize no matter how they were mingled in a sentence. Ordinary tricks he had learned by the score, and in the end Manners decided that his dog did think and, up to a certain point, thought like a human being.

In the two years the relationship between the big dog and his master had become more like that of two friends than of animal and man. Satan was uncanny in the manner in which he reacted to the moods of his master. If the professor was happy, the dog's eyes would dance with light; but if Manners seemed depressed, the animal's face appeared to grow longer.

As the clumsy dog placed his heavy head in his master's lap, a deep long sigh escaped from the animal's lips. So unexpected was the sound, so filled was it with gloom, that for a moment Manners was taken aback. Then, ruffling the brown head, he laughed at the sad expression in the dog's eyes. They were both bored, he thought, both a little fed up with the storm.

The dog at last dropped down to the floor and lay curled by his feet. Picking up a book, Manners tried again to read, and once more the effort was a failure. Read he could not, and in the end the volume found itself once more on the desk. Sliding down in the chair, he closed his eyes, and after a while he dozed.

It was the incessant ringing of his doorbell, followed by the growl of the dog, which roused him to a startled attention. That anyone should be coming out on such a night surprised him, but as he rose to go out into the hallway he remembered that the chief of police of the small city had half suggested he might drop in that evening.

As his hand reached forth for the knob he slowly shook his head. There had been an anxious note that afternoon in Rogan's voice when he called him on the telephone. There were long years of service behind the

chief, and he was not much given to showing signs of anxiety, but as he had listened to the voice which came floating over the wire, Manners had decided the man was nervous.

He started to open the door, only to have the wind wrench it from his grasp to send it banging against the wall. In a dashing spray the rain came spattering across his face. As he hastened to close the door the man who had been standing upon the large veranda slipped into the hallway.

It was a heavy, thickset individual he turned to greet, wearing a dripping faded raincoat. Water trickled from the rim of the soft hat, and the round, red, kindly face which looked at him glistened with moisture. Shaking himself like a great dog, Rogan allowed himself to be divested of hat and coat.

They were old friends. It had started in Manner's early boyhood. Rogan had been a patrolman then and would stop on his beat to pass the time of day with the youngster playing upon the sidewalk. It ripened into an odd friendship after Manners went upon the faculty of the college, and the time came when he was able to do the police official a favor.

Westland was only a little city upon the shore of one of the Great Lakes. There came a day when wealthy people of nearby states discovered the winding, wooded shore line, the sandy beaches. Beautiful homes had been built along the lake front; large estates came into being. In the summer the population was increased by five thousand people.

Manners' early boyhood had been passed near the

small city. Later his father moved to the large university city many hundred miles away, where he made a fortune, but the farm and the white house, from whose veranda one could see the lake, never left his possession. When it became his own, Manners discovered it was in the very heart of the select summer colony.

For years the summer people had been dissatisfied with the head of the local police force. When the man was retired, they got together and decided that, as they paid the bulk of the taxes, they would pick the new chief of police themselves, get one who really knew something about police methods, find a man who had been upon the force of some large city and would apply modern methods to the antiquated system of Westland. It was then that Manners remembered Rogan. During the years he had become police captain in the university city, the most respected one on the force. It took much argument before he could be persuaded to come to the small city, but the salary was larger, the position more important, and in the end he accepted.

It was not only because Rogan had driven seven miles through the storm that Manners felt that the chief was jumpy. As a rule he was a rather talkative individual, but after the first few words of greeting he followed his host into the living room without a word. There was a nervous look upon his face as he seated himself by the desk. He appeared weary and a little anxious.

Excusing himself for a moment, Manners hurried from the room. Left to himself, Rogan slowly stretched out his legs as he gazed reflectively around. He was tired;

the large room, with its colored prints upon the walls and the long lines of well filled bookcases, was very restful. Just what might be within the covers of all the books he had often wondered. He was a shrewd practical man, though not an educated one, and the long rows of books impressed him. He half smiled as he thought what a headache a man like himself would get if he tried to read them all. But this thought lasted only a second; his hand reached into the inside pocket of his coat, as if he were reassuring himself of something that was there.

He straightened up in the chair when Manners returned bearing a silver tray. Soberly he watched the tray being placed upon the desk, noticed the pinched back bottle, flanked by two glasses. Without a word he reached forth and poured the straw colored liquid into a glass. With a shake of his head he refused the soda. After a first slow sip of his drink, he leaned back and looked at his friend.

It was a long reflective look, as though he had never seen the tall young man before. The sharp eyes rested for a second upon the keen face, then noticed the rather costly gray suit, a scrutiny which Manners bore with a smile upon his lips. Rogan would speak when he was ready. The chief did seem to be a bit nervous, with an odd air of depression. The round red face scowled a little at his smile, the scowl of a weary man, tired and disgusted with his job. Why he should feel that way was more than Manners could understand. As a rule Rogan was a cheerful individual.

Draining his glass, the chief reached out for the bot-

tle, to pour out a measured inch of the Scotch. Then he spoke:

"It's sure one hell of a night, Harley. You would not think anyone would want to be out in a car on a night like this, but a quarter of a mile down the road there is a woman parked in a coupé. Pretty stormy night for a date."

Manners agreed, and for a few moments they talked of the weather. It was the chief's opinion that the rain was about over, and he expressed himself fluently upon the seven days of storm, but, as the words fell from his lips, Manners knew he was simply talking to hide his thoughts. With a sudden gesture the chief swallowed his inch of liquor. Putting the glass back on the tray, the big hands carefully placed the silver service in position, then, with a sudden shrug of his shoulders, as though he had made up his mind, he turned to Manners.

"Harley," he said, "when birds like yourself—you people who teach that stuff you call psychology—use the word 'evil' what do you mean?"

Manners threw him a quick glance. His first impression had been that Rogan was fooling, but a look at the sober face showed him the man was earnest. It was an odd question to come from the lips of the chief, and he did not reply for a moment. Taking a cigarette from his case he slowly lighted it. He watched the smoke weave a trembling, pale path toward the ceiling. Then he spoke:

"Are you asking your question from the standpoint of a philosopher or that of a psychologist?"

There came a motion of disgust.

"Never mind the big words. I just want to know what people of your sort mean by the word 'evil.' "

"For a good many ages, Rogan, people have been trying to decide just what they did mean by the word. It has a different meaning to every individual who uses it. The fanatics and those reformers who are mixed up in the reform organizations, censorship leagues, and the like, say the things they oppose are evil."

The chief nodded, half opened his mouth to speak, but thought better of it.

"The viewpoint as to what is evil depends a great deal upon a person's bringing up—his environment, cultural background, education and general intelligence. As a rule the average person always thinks that the things of which he does not approve, things he does not care to do himself, are evil."

Rogan nodded again, but said nothing. Seeing that he would not speak, Manners continued, though he thought the discussion rather absurd.

"From the standpoint of philosophy, evil is anything which harms or injures the dignity and beauty of life, and of course what those things are," he threw out his hands in a gesture, "that depends upon the viewpoint of each individual. But why do you ask, Rogan?"

The chief made no reply. A hand went searching into the pocket of his vest. It came forth with a long, villainous looking stogie. There was some little difficulty in getting it going, an effort which took much sober attention. When the first dark smoke came from his lips, the other hand brought forth a sheet of paper from his coat, a letter, which, without a word, he handed to

Manners. The letter had been read many times. The paper was rather unusual, the finest kind of white rag paper. Now it was soiled, creased by the many lines of awkward folding. Evidently the typewriter had been dirty, for the letters were soiled and blurred.

The shadow of evil lies over Westland. The police amount to little; they never punish those who are really evil. The most evil persons of the city walk untouched. In a week we ourselves will deal with them.

It was not the most coherent note that Manners had ever read. He observed that "evil" had been misspelled, and it seemed evident that the person who had written it was not very familiar with the use of the typewriter. The unevenly spaced letters told that, or else the few lines had been purposely misspaced. There was no signature. He raised his head to cast an inquiring glance at the chief. Rogan's eyes met his and the gaze was serious. There was a questioning note in the slow heavy voice.

"You know, Harley, we get all sorts of darned fool crank letters down at the station. Everybody who wants to get even with their neighbors writes to us. But this thing bothers me, bothers me a good deal."

A gloomy, serious look swept over the red face. Manners thought he understood what caused it. The seven days of rain was the reason. People became depressed when the weather was bad. That was the time people committed suicide, men deserted their wives. There is a psychological connection between the weather and one's feelings. He said as much.

Rogan did not agree. He admitted, however, that the rain had gotten under his skin, but, after gloomily looking at the end of his stogie, he dryly remarked that there had been other letters, one every day for a week, letters which hinted that the writer would take the law into his own hands, do it very soon.

"Some crank," was Manners' observation.

"Maybe—but I got a funny hunch something is going to break, have felt it all week. You see the letters which came in after that first one were odd. They went: 'Five days now.' 'Four days.' The one this morning said, 'One day.' And that means trouble."

Someone, thought Manners, was having fun with the chief. But he could see that Rogan was not of that opinion. There was a tenseness to the man's jaw, a serious look in his eyes. Whatever was back of the letters, one thing was true. They were worrying the chief. There was no doubt of it.

"I would not let the thing bother me very much, Rogan. You must have received lots of letters in your time on the force."

"Sure, I have, but there is something about these that gets under my skin. It's the use of that word 'evil,' the saying that the police never get the evil people of the city. I've tried to figure out who they might be."

"That would be very difficult to say. It depends upon the type of person using the word. You have not had very much crime lately, have you?"

The chief shook his head. There was little crime going on in the city, and what there was happened to be of the usual sort. Once in a while a pay station would be

held up; there were the assault cases, and of course the average amount of bootlegging, but to the chief the city seemed unusually virtuous. He was worried, however. Manners would have been amused by the chief's attitude, but he could see it was not the moment to show amusement. Rogan was gloomy, very moody, and actually seemed to believe that something was going to happen, but Manners felt certain that the feeling was caused by the weather.

He spent most of the next hour trying to bring the official out of his black mood. The flying trip he had taken that spring to Paris was mentioned. A visit to the black museum of Scotland was described. But it was of no avail. Through it all Rogan sat slumped far down in his chair, his face expressionless, and it was not until the hour ended that he spoke.

"I think somebody is going to get bumped off," he said slowly.

Manners threw a disgusted look over to the other chair. Then, without replying, he rose to his feet. Going to the desk, he took the bottle and poured a stiff drink into the glass the chief had used. A much smaller one went into his own. Placing the drink in Rogan's unresisting hand, he clapped him on the back.

"You certainly need to cheer up, Rogan," he said. "Take that Scotch. 'Bumped off.' Who do you think is going to glory?"

Slowly the Scotch vanished. When the chief had placed the glass on the tray, his heavy voice rumbled out.

"I don't know. That's the trouble. But I have a hunch

something is going to happen. You wait and see."

Try as he would, Manners was unable to remove the idea from the chief's mind. To every argument, Rogan would simply shake his head. As a rule he was apt to disagree with what was said, for he dearly loved an argument, but tonight he refused to reply. Slumped far down in his chair, he sat, a silent figure of dejection.

It was eleven when he rose to his feet, saying that he had a seven-mile drive and it was time he was going. Very soberly he put on his raincoat and took the soft hat in his big hands. As he turned to say good night, the glances of the two men met. At the glum expression upon the face of the chief, Manners laughed.

He opened the door to observe that the rain had ended. Across the veranda he could glimpse the trees upon his lawn, dark shadowy outlines in the night. The wind was still blowing, though it had died down a little. On the shore the waves were rolling in from the lake. Overhead a faint moon was trying to peer through the scurrying clouds.

Returning to the room he stood a moment by the desk, then noticed the dog standing silently by his side. As he looked at the animal, the big mouth opened in a yawn. With a laugh he walked out of the living room and into the kitchen. Going to a closet he took an old blanket and placed it on the floor near a window. When he had done this the dog dropped upon it with a contented sigh. Back once more in the living room, Manners sank down in the chair by the desk. The floor lamp had been brought close; he picked up the book he had been reading earlier in the evening. It was a book

he should have enjoyed, for it dealt with a subject close to his heart, but after a while the book was replaced on the desk. Leaning back in his chair he started to think.

Something odd about that feeling of depression Rogan had. Not at all like the chief, as a rule he was always cheerful. No doubt the rain was the cause, rain and wind. It had been a gloomy week. Rain did make one feel badly. Remember that week in Paris. Rain, fog, loneliness, dejection. And Rogan wanted to know what one meant by evil. Odd idea, as if anyone knew.

He thought of that for a while. If the world could only agree upon what was evil it would be a good thing. Most things people got excited over had nothing the matter with them. Evil after all was mostly a mental thing. What one considered evil depended upon one's education and mental background. One-piece bathing suits, cards, theaters, wine, Sunday amusements were evil to some people. He did agree with Rogan in one thing. It was queer that there should have been a letter every day for a week. One might suppose the first one to have been a joke, but there had been seven, and the chief had said that each letter had mentioned that the writer would punish—evil. It was an odd word to employ. Most people never used it.

He tried to picture the type of individual who would take the time to write a letter every day for a week to a police officer, an anonymous letter, of course; that sort of individual never signed his name. Being a professor of psychology, he knew the type rather well—some repressed individual who was a mass of complexes and inhibitions, one who was a bit of a coward, afraid, yet

wanting power. Perhaps someone who wished revenge. He gave a start. If his last idea was correct, there might be something in the fear which was in the chief's mind. Then he laughed. People who wrote letters took it out in writing. They never did anything.

From the kitchen there came the sudden barking of the dog, a loud, sinister, warning bark. Startled into attention, Manners sat upright. As he listened he heard the sound of an engine on his drive, a car whose motor was a little noisy, one which evidently had been driven rapidly. Surprised, for it was too late for anyone to call, he jumped to his feet. As he did so, he heard the sound of someone running upon the veranda. Then came the doorbell, the peal long, insistent and commanding.

With the loud barking of the dog resounding through the house, Manners hastened to the door. Eagerly he flung it aside, only to have Rogan go rushing past him. Without saying a word the chief hastened to the living room, Manners at his heels. Something was wrong, but what? As the chief brushed past him, Manners had had a momentary glimpse of his face, a set, stern face, no longer gloomy or even weary. It was the face of a man called back to duty, and the first barking commands which went over the telephone told Manners that the chief had become again an efficient official. Short and crisp were the sentences barked out over an unseen wire, all directed to the police station, sentences commanding that the police ambulance with the police doctor be sent at once to Lake Drive. And,

by the way the voice snapped forth, he meant without any delay.

As he slammed the receiver back on the hook and looked for a second down at the table, his eyes rested on the bottle of Scotch and a hand went reaching out, only to be withdrawn. Better not touch that now, was the thought. Then he turned to glance at the questioning face of Manners. For a moment the eyes of the two men met and held. Then Rogan spoke, crisply and rapidly:

"Remember I told you when I came in here tonight that I saw a car parked out on the drive, a car with a woman in it. It was still there when I went back a few moments ago. Something about it puzzled me a bit, so I stopped and got out. Called out and asked what they were doing. And what do you think?"

Manners made no reply. Although he slowly shook his head, yet in his heart he knew the answer to the question. He was not surprised at the next words.

"There was a woman in the car. As she did not speak, I opened the door. She was dead."

"Murdered?"

There was a long silence. In it Rogan appeared to be trying to form an opinion. Then he slowly shook his head.

"I don't think so—but I'm not sure."

CHAPTER II

THERE was such a doubtful note in the dry voice that Manners looked at him in amazement. The soft hat was pulled down over his brow and the dark eyes glittered a little, but the flushed face was expressionless and it was impossible to tell what was back of the remark.

"Got a flashlight?" he snapped out.

There was one in the kitchen, and Manners hastened to find it. It was discovered at last in a drawer. Pushing aside the dog who brushed against his feet, he hastily flung on a slicker, grabbed a hat, and hurried out to the living room. There he discovered that Rogan had already gone out on the veranda.

For a second, after leaving the house, he found it difficult to see. Down on the driveway the lights on the chief's car threw a narrow path of light through the darkness. From the house there floated a sharp sudden bark from the dog, angry at being left alone. The rain appeared to be over, though from the trees came the steady dripping of moisture. Even the wind had died down, though it was still blowing from across the lake. Down on the beach he could hear the waves beating a steady rumble against the shore. Overhead thick clouds were scurrying across the face of a faint

moon. There was no doubt that the week of storm had come to a close.

With an impatient growl in his hurried voice Rogan motioned him to the car. It was not a new car, nor was it very silent. With a splutter and roar the engine sprang into life as with a clash the gears meshed. Around the side of the house they went circling the flower gardens. Then, sweeping past a large stone garage, the headlights picked up the dark highway fifty yards distant.

In Manners' boyhood the farm had contained several hundreds of acres. When property along the shore became desirable, the time came when the property was far too valuable to be used for farmland. Manners had sold most of it, reserving for himself the old house, with three acres along the water front.

With a skid the car swept out of the driveway to slide upon the slippery concrete of the highway. To the left the road ran into the city; to the right it passed through the high hedges of the summer estates. Manners wondered in which direction the chief would turn. He was a little surprised to see the headlights pick up the white concrete which twisted away from the city.

There were several questions running through his mind, questions which he wanted answered. Rogan had said he did not think the woman had met a violent death, but he had also added, a little doubtfully, that he was not sure. Why the doubt, the uncertain tone in his voice as he made the remark? He knew better than to put his thoughts into words. Slumped back in

the seat Rogan was looking straight ahead. Turning, Manners threw a quick look at his face, an expressionless face, with an unlighted stogie stuck at a sharp angle in one corner of his mouth. He glimpsed a jaw shut in a determined line, saw the hands gripping tightly the wheel.

Turning his glance away from the chief, he looked through the windshield. The glass was streaked with rain and evidently had not been washed for a long time. To see clearly was difficult, but what he did observe only increased the feeling of depression which had been with him all the evening. Under the lights of the car the road was a gray streak of slippery concrete. On each side stretched gloom and darkness. High hedges hid the houses from sight, hedges forming a black line, seemingly running into infinity. Beyond them could be glimpsed trees, deep shadows of blackness which his eyes could not pierce.

The road curved a little ahead of them, and the speed of the car began to slacken. As they came around the bend, Manners saw the lights of a car several hundred feet in advance, a car standing a little off the road, whose lights played over a high privet hedge, a motionless car, whose engine was silent. At the same moment he observed something else.

As the lights from their car played over the machine in the distance, a dark figure sprang off the running board. They were too far away to distinguish much about the man, for he was on the side away from the road. That he was fairly tall and dressed in some sort of a dark suit was all that they could see. Without

turning to look in their direction, he had leaped from the running board and started down the road.

At the sight, a sudden oath jumped to Rogan's lips. The machine leaped forward as he stepped on the gas. For a second or so his headlights flickered over the back of the running man, only to see the indistinct figure turn from the road and go running up a driveway. Then it vanished from their sight. With a short vigorous exclamation Rogan brought his car to a stop. The lights played over the motionless machine only a few feet ahead, a small coupé, standing with its lights on, partly off the roadway. Through the windshield Manners could make out the form of a woman behind the wheel.

With a little grunt of command Rogan slipped out of the car, Manners following. The chief's hand went reaching for the searchlight; when it was given him he snapped it on. Then both men hastened to the side of the silent machine, but when they reached it both hesitated for a moment.

It was a small car, of a well known make. Manners could tell it was new, but the bright blue color did not hold his attention. His eyes went searching the seat where a motionless figure was sitting in a queer attitude behind the wheel, a silent figure, which he expected every second would turn and speak to them, though he knew very well it would never speak. As he looked he gave a little shiver. Something sinister and threatening had crept into the darkness of the night, a feeling which made him wish for a moment that he was back again in his brilliantly lighted living room.

He knew what had caused it—the silence and gloom and, above all, that motionless, silent figure within the car, the figure to whom the wind and darkness would never matter, to whom nothing would ever matter again.

Very slowly Rogan's hand went out for the catch on the door. Without a word he threw it back. The flame of the searchlight went traveling into the machine, rested first upon the floor, passed slowly up to the seat, to search behind the wheel, and came to a rest at last upon a white, beautiful face.

Manners had never thought there was anything dignified about death. He did not in this case. Instead of being dignified the woman's face bore a trace of shocked surprise and horror, as if what had taken place had come very suddenly and unexpectedly. That was his first impression as he looked within the car. His second was that he had seen the woman somewhere. It was a beautiful face, he thought, though the over-rouged lips were a trifle too full; there was also too much rouge on her cheeks. It was the face of a woman who had been sure of her beauty, proud of it, and was also self-willed. A foolish little hat covered the short blond hair, and a stray lock had crept down over the white forehead. She was dressed simply enough, though he had an idea the white sport dress had perhaps cost more than it had seemed to at first glance. The skirt was very short, the silk stockings covering the shapely legs were transparent. One hand still gripped the wheel, but the other had fallen into her lap. One thing however did surprise him; she was not wearing a coat. That seemed odd. No matter how

short the distance she had driven, he would have expected her to be wearing a raincoat of some sort; or, if not wearing it, to have one in the machine. It had been raining hard for days, especially hard all the evening, and even to come from a house to the car one would have needed a coat. But she was not wearing one, nor was there a coat in the machine.

Silently Rogan climbed clumsily into the seat. The big hands which raised the woman's head were far more gentle than one might have expected. The examination which followed, though brief, was thorough and exacting. When it was over the chief slid out of the car to stand by Manners' side.

"She's dead," he said slowly. "I should say she has been dead two or three hours. There is nothing about it that does not look like a natural death, no wounds or the like. But—"

Manners' eyes went searching over the instrument board. Below the little dashlight was the ignition switch. The switch, he noticed, was on, with the key in the lock. Taking the flashlight from Rogan's hand he threw it over the gasoline gauge. It stood at empty, but all the lights of the machine were on. There was something odd about that instrument board, he decided. The clutch was in neutral, just where one would place it to stop a car. But why was the ignition on? Had the woman found herself out of gas—there was none in the tank—and driven over to the side of the road to wait for help? Or, had she suddenly felt ill, stopped the car and died before she could turn off the engine? Above all, what had caused her death, a

death which must have come as suddenly as a flash of lightning?

He voiced these thoughts only to have Rogan take the flashlight from his hand and study the instrument board. The light waved slowly across the shining circles, then dropped lower. A hand tried the gear rod, moving it from side to side. Satisfied, the light crept up over the seat, to remain fixed on a red handbag, which Rogan opened. There was nothing of interest in it, nothing at all except a tiny box of powder and a lip stick. Money was conspicuous by its absence, nor were there any license cards for the car. Rogan tossed the bag back on the seat. With a puzzled expression upon his face he turned and glanced down the road.

"Anything hit you odd about this?" he asked soberly.

"The engine must have been running when the car stopped. What time was it when you saw it standing here?"

"Let's see," said the puzzled voice, "I got to your house a little after nine. This car was here then, but I don't know if the engine was running or not. Just saw it as I went by; thought the woman was waiting for someone. It's been here two hours at least, but there is no gas in it; the clutch is out; the ignition is on. I wonder—"

What he wondered, Manners never discovered. Turning, Rogan walked to the rear of the car. The flashlight played across the concrete, a road wet and glistening under the shaft of light. Then it swayed over to the bank, a bank of dirt in which could be

made out the tracks of the machine. They followed the road almost a hundred feet before they stopped. It was easy to see where the car had first left the road. There was the place where the front wheel had gone into the dirt, only to come back again on the highway. The driver must have realized she was off the road and pulled back on the concrete. Then the tire mark could be seen in the dirt again. At first it ran along the side of the road, well defined and clear; then it began to wander away from the concrete, until the rear wheel was also off the concrete. Easy enough to follow to the place where the machine must have suddenly stopped.

The tracks told a plain story. About a hundred feet from where the car was standing, the driver had started to leave the road. This had been corrected once, only to have the same thing happen a few feet farther on. This time the car did not go back to the paving. Instead, the wheels began to go farther and farther away from the road. What was behind the tire prints, Manners wondered.

The car had started to leave the road a little over a hundred feet from where it had stopped. Was that the place where the woman had first felt death creeping upon her? If so it had come very quickly, so quickly that there had been just time, a hundred feet farther on, to throw off the clutch, but not enough time to stop the engine. A disquieting thought swept over him.

Back in the motionless car sat the silent figure of a woman. In life she had been a beautiful woman—the glimpse of her figure as the flashlight played over

it had showed that—a woman with well formed legs, beautiful shoulders and attractive features, a woman who could not have been over thirty, who wore a wedding ring. She had not been murdered—yet what had caused her sudden death?

There was no time to think this over, or to speak to the chief, several yards ahead of him. He heard behind him the sound of an approaching machine and turned in time to see the headlights come flashing around a bend in the road. A car was approaching rapidly, going in the direction of the city. They were by the parked machine when the approaching car reached their side. There came the sound of screeching brakes, the suction of tires upon a slippery pavement. As the machine stopped, a head was thrust through the open window. The voice which spoke was thin, with a pompous note in the tone:

“Any trouble?”

Before the reply could be made, the chief was recognized. The door of the car swung suddenly open, as a stout little gentleman came hastily out, a man with a smooth complexion, white, well kept skin and a very blond mustache, one whose entire attitude showed that he had a very good opinion of himself. Manners knew him, at least by sight and reputation. Everyone in Westwood knew Doctor Remington, though there were some who smiled a little when his name was mentioned. The physician's practice was large and mostly among the wealthy women. There were those who thought he was overrated and who said he really knew very little about medicine.

As the short figure came walking over the pavement, Rogan felt a little relieved. He had told his police officers to hurry and it was time they arrived. There was no doubt the woman had met a natural death, but— He knew it was absurd, yet he was suspicious, and because he was suspicious he was glad to see the doctor. Remington was pretty well known in the city.

As he came to their side the physician threw a hurried, questioning look at the two men. His first words were typical; at least so Manners thought. In an important manner he mentioned that he had been to dinner, throwing out the name of a wealthy summer resident. Then he became very solemn as he asked what was wrong. Very briefly he was informed of what had happened. The news did not appear to surprise him and he readily agreed to have a look at the body. Thrusting the flashlight into Manner's hand, Rogan opened the door of the car as he beckoned to the doctor to climb in.

Standing by the car, with the flashlight playing within, Manners watched the physician carefully look at the silent lips and touch the sightless eyes. Though he could not see the man's face, yet from his manner he judged the examination would be brief. The doctor evidently had no doubts as to the cause of death. As Manners thought this, he noticed a small object on the floor of the car.

It lay almost beside the feet of the doctor. If he moved there was no doubt he would step upon it. Reaching down Manners' hand went over the floor, grasped the object he had seen, and at the same second

touched something else, something soft and smooth which crumbled in his clutching fingers.

Straightening up he threw the light upon the objects he was holding. Nothing startling, he thought, only a very small book and a round piece of rubber, objects of little importance, though he did wonder at the smallness of the book. It was very small; not over three inches in length and about two in width. He was just about to turn to the title-page when the doctor stumbled in getting out of the car. Quickly thrusting the book and the piece of rubber into his pocket, his hand shot out to steady the little man.

Standing beside the car, the doctor slowly rubbed his two hands together. There was an important look upon his face as he glanced at the two men beside him.

"I rather think I have seen that woman somewhere," came his voice, a voice thin and a little too high in tone to be pleasant. "Rather a nice looking woman, good figure and all that. Too bad, too bad."

Rogan gave a gesture of impatience. His rough voice barked forth:

"What was the matter with her?"

Again the doctor rubbed the soft hands together as his voice became gravely professional.

"Why, she just died, Chief. That's about all. I would say, to put it into non-professional language, that she had a stroke. Either that or a blood clot reached the brain. In a way it's all the same thing. That's what happened; there is no doubt of it."

There came a moment's silence during which Rogan

cast a scowling backward glance toward the city. Then he turned.

"Humph," he hesitated. "Then you say it is a natural death, sure of it?"

The doctor threw him a surprised look and the astonishment showed in his voice.

"Why, of course, Chief, of course. Did you think she was murdered? It is clearly a natural death, one which swooped down upon her while she was driving. I would stake my professional reputation on that."

He laughed a short laugh as he spoke the last words, as though he thought it impossible that anyone could doubt his opinions; and Manners could hardly blame him. There could be no doubt the doctor was correct. The woman's death had been a natural one. As he thought this, he glanced at Rogan in time to see him nod his head, though the gesture seemed doubtful. Then he heard the sound of an approaching car.

It was coming from the direction of the city. As its headlights swept around the bend in the road they trembled from side to side. It was being driven rapidly and the driver had to throw on the brakes suddenly as he stopped just ahead of them. Two blue coated policemen tumbled from the police ambulance to come hurrying to the side of their chief.

"Couldn't get the doctor, Chief," was the first remark.

Rogan hesitated a second as if thinking something over. Then a look of relief swept over his face. He turned to Remington.

"I suppose, Doctor, we can get you to sign a death certificate. It will avoid all the formality of an autopsy and allow us to remove the body at once?"

"Certainly, certainly," was the smooth reply. "Be glad to help you. Guess my name on the certificate will satisfy the law just as well as that of your police physician."

Then followed a few barked out commands, during which the doctor said good night, climbed back into his machine and drove away. The ambulance was driven close to the parked car. Carefully and tenderly the woman's body was taken from the seat and placed in the ambulance. One of the policemen filled the empty gas tank and at Rogan's order started to drive the woman's machine towards the city. Before he did so Manners walked around the coupé.

The driver of the ambulance started to climb into his seat, but a command from his chief stopped him. Rogan wanted to make another examination of the tire marks. Why, Manners could not tell, and he refused to follow him down the road, saying he would walk back to his cottage. He called "Good night." His house was only a few hundred yards away.

He walked slowly at first, but once round the bend of the road started to run. He had put the flashlight in his pocket, and the road was a long dark tunnel of gloom. On each side were walls of hedges, black lines against the gloom. Manners was in a hurry; he wanted to reach the little lane which he knew ran through the hedge close to his own land.

He knew who owned the place next to his. A large

estate of at least thirty acres, it belonged to the owner of the large department store of the city, a tight-lipped, thin, bigoted individual, who had plenty of money—far more money than friends. But this was not what he was thinking of as he ran down the road.

As they had driven around the bend and he had first glimpsed the motionless coupé, they had seen a dark shadowy figure looking into the window of the machine, a figure, which, upon their approach had given a half startled look around, then had run rapidly down the road and turned down a driveway.

Though the chief had observed the man, yet he had said nothing about him. Manners thought this odd. Why the man had been looking into the machine he could not tell, though he concluded that curiosity might be the reason, but it was more than idle curiosity which caused the figure to run when he saw the lights of their car. And he had run, run to vanish up the driveway.

It had puzzled Manners and he thought it should have puzzled the chief. But not a word had Rogan said about the occurrence. Something else seemed to be bothering the chief. Just what it was he could not determine. Perhaps those silly letters, though they ought to be fairly obvious. Some crank was the writer, and that was all there was to them.

But there was one thing he could not understand. As he walked around the parked car after the ambulance had arrived, he had heard a slight sound, a breaking branch and the crackling and rustling of twigs, the faint sound of someone moving behind the

hedge. Of that he was positive. It was true the engines of the two cars were running, so it was not very still, but he had been close to the hedge. He had heard something stirring, the sound of a branch being stepped upon, the noise of rustling twigs. Someone was behind the hedge, someone who was very much interested in which was going on out in the road.

Why anyone should be interested in the examination of the car he could not fathom. The woman had died a natural death from a stroke which had seized her while she was driving. Yet someone was interested. Again he could see the dim outlined figure peering into the motionless car, the car upon whose seat sat the silent figure of a beautiful woman. And he had heard someone behind the hedge. Of that he was positive.

He knew what he was going to do. Only a few hundred feet from his own boundary was an opening in the hedge. A path started from the road to run down to the big house of his neighbor. He knew every inch of the estate, had played over the fields as a boy. What he was planning to do might be foolish, but curiosity had always been his great weakness. He intended to slip through the hedge and if possible get a glimpse at the figure he believed was crouching in the shadows.

CHAPTER III

To find the opening proved to be a more difficult task than he had expected. It was simply a gap through which one could enter the field without having to travel down to the drive, a quarter of a mile away. A person driving by on the road would be unlikely to observe the place where the green leaves became thin and where, for a few paces, they barely existed. By walking along the side of the hedge and trailing his hand over the sharp twigs he found the opening.

Slipping through, he stood with his back pressed against the green barrier. The hedge was higher than his head, stretching away to become lost in the darkness. Far down the road he could see the reflection of the lights of the cars, but no light came into the field. The sound of the running motors came to his ears.

Before him stretched the dim, gloomy vastness of the field. It was filled with tall elm trees and, though he was unable to distinguish them all, yet he could make out a few. Dark, gaunt outlines they were, blending into the general blackness of the night. The wind was whistling through the branches, branches he was unable to see.

Hesitating a moment, he half decided to go back to the road. After all there was no sense in what he was doing. The woman's death had been a natural one. Even if he managed to secure a glimpse of the figure

they had seen looking into the car, it would be of no importance. Yet he wondered. Had there been someone in the car with the woman, someone who could not afford to be discovered because of the scandal it would make? That might be so, but, as he thought this, he shook his head. Why was he hiding behind the hedge?

With a sudden resolution he turned his eyes away from the opening which led back to the road. Studying the field, he decided what he would do. In front of him were the trees, vague outlines which vanished in pools of darkness. He could dart from trunk to trunk until he was in a line with the cars parked out on the road. It was doubtful if he would be seen.

Darting quickly across the grass, he reached the shelter of a large elm. Lost in its shadow he stood listening. Above his head the wind was rustling the leaves which he could not see; far away he heard the distant barking of a dog, but from the direction of the hedge there came not a sound. He was not surprised. The man would be crouching down, waiting for the cars to move.

From tree to tree he crept, pausing behind each sheltering trunk a moment. He was coming closer to the hedge, for the trees crept down towards the road. What was more, he was now in a direct line from the two cars. As he looked out at the road, he could see the dark top of the police ambulance and hear the rough voice of the chief.

It was then that he saw the dark shadow crouching against the hedge, an outline, which was a darker mass than the hedge itself, the crouching, listening figure of

a man, who, Manners judged, was listening to what was being said by the chief, listening and, at the same time, looking through the hedge.

Suddenly he felt a little foolish. He had proved that his idea was correct. There was a man behind the hedge. He was only a few feet away. But, now that he had discovered him, what should he do? He could not rush out and attack him. The individual was doing nothing wrong. Though he was keeping himself under cover, yet he had a right to do so if he chose. Just what to do Manners could not decide. Perhaps to go back to his own house was the thing.

There came a sudden roar from the motors of the cars, the sound of clashing gears. He watched the machines start down the road; a moment later they were lost to sight. Then his attention came back to where he had seen the figure of a man. What he saw rather startled him, not only startled him, but drove all idea of returning to his own home out of his mind.

After the cars had moved away, the crouching figure stood upright. As Manners watched, he saw the man struggle with the hedge, then, making an opening, slip through. The task must have been unpleasant, for several muffled oaths floated to the professor's ears. There came the reflection of a flashlight, playing about the place where they had found the parked car.

Darting over the grass, Manners stood in the spot where the man had hidden. The hedge was thick, the branches many, but there were a few places where he could get an indistinct glance at the circle of light. He was unable to see the man's features, but, from where

he was crouched on the wet ground, he could watch the circle of light as it went traveling over the ground. Back and forth swept the circle of flame. There was no doubt the man holding the flashlight was looking for something. Again and again the circle of light passed over the same spot of ground. But, whatever it was he was looking for, the search was not successful. Suddenly the light was turned out and, as it vanished, the man swore.

Silence came, broken at last by the sound of hurrying feet upon the concrete. The man was walking down the road, walking in the direction which led away from the city. Starting over the grass, Manners followed behind the hedge. Above everything else he wanted to have a look at the person out in the road. There was not much need to be careful, for he was hidden from sight. Then he remembered the driveway only a short distance ahead.

The driveway ran down to the house of his next door neighbor, Robert Hurd. Manners had little to do with the owner of the department store, for he did not like the narrow, bigoted streak which was in the man's make-up. There was little chance that the man out on the road was going there. As he thought this, Manners foot slipped on a fallen branch and he went tumbling to the ground.

Though he had fallen on the wet ground, he knew he had made a little noise, but picking himself up, he judged the sound of the wind in the trees had drowned the sound of his fall. Wiping the wet grass and dirt from his face, he started again along the side of the

hedge, following it until he could see the driveway in front of him. The hedge curved away from the road, and he was glad it did, for the man was turning to go down the driveway. What was more, he had started to hurry. On a half trot he was hastening in the direction of Hurd's house. For a moment Manners watched him, then, darting from tree to tree, started to follow.

He did not dare to go out on the driveway, for if the man should turn he would be seen. To be seen was the last thing Manners wished. Who the man might be, or where he was going, he could not decide. But he was going to follow until he did know, until he knew at least where he was going.

Tall elm trees, whose leafy branches formed a dark arch over his head, lined each side of the drive. The moon was trying to peer through the fast drifting clouds, but the effort was not very successful. A little light lay upon the road, but behind the line of trees was darkness. The pool of black shadows he felt certain would hide him from sight.

Darting from tree to tree, he stopped every other moment and looked carefully at the driveway. Far ahead he could make out the indistinct, hurrying figure. The man was walking very rapidly, as though well accustomed to coming down that strip of road in the darkness. This fact bothered Manners.

Though the man who lived in the house at the end of the driveway was wealthy, yet he had few friends. Manners knew Hurd was very close, running his large house with but one servant. He had seen the chauffeur several times, a rather stout individual whose figure

was unlike the shadowy outline on the driveway. The figure ahead of him could not be Hurd's chauffeur, and he doubted greatly if it was Hurd himself.

It was dark under the trees, and the week of rain had made the ground wet and clinging. The grass was high, dripping with moisture, filled with broken branches and high, clinging shrubbery. Slippery vines clutched at his feet, and already his suit was a sodden mass of fabric. He half smiled as he thought how it would look in the morning light. He came at last to a place where the road was blocked by a large garden and diverged in two directions. One led down to the house, whose dark outline he was just able to glimpse; the other went in the opposite direction, going, he thought, to the garage. It was in this direction the man had vanished.

Hesitating, he wondered just what he should do. The man had vanished around a curve in the winding driveway. If he were to follow him he would have to leave the protection of the trees. Suddenly he made up his mind. He would not be able to see the face of the man he had been following, but he could find out where he was going. As he thought this he darted out upon the driveway.

He ran as softly as he could and judged his footsteps made little noise. Past the lawns and flower gardens he went, running around the bend of the road. To his left was a field, while on the other side stretched the dim shadow of a lawn. For a few hundred feet he hurried, then came out in a large open space. It was dark, but not so dark that he could not distinguish ob-

jects around him. Before him loomed the dark shadow of a low stone building, a building perhaps thirty feet high. In an instant he recognized it as a garage. Then he observed something else. Behind the garage was a fence, and another was on the right, and they were very high.

He paused, perplexed. The man had just come down the driveway. Where had he gone? It was true he might have darted off to vanish in the darkness of the field on the left, but this he doubted. To escape over the back fence seemed impossible; it was too high to be easily climbed. He could hardly have turned back in the direction of the house. If he had been going to the house, he would have taken the other turn in the driveway.

With a shrug of his shoulders he walked over to the garage. It must be a three-car garage, he thought, for two doors were slightly open. Walking to the nearest one, he stood listening. Not a sound came to his ears. Could the man be in the garage? As he glanced at the partly opened door, a thought came to him. Whoever the individual might be, he would teach him a lesson. If his quarry were inside, he might close the door, snap the lock tight, and the man would be forced to stay there until morning.

Coming closer he started to close the door, only to discover that it stuck a little. Bending over, he gave a sudden shove. As he did so he heard a faint sound behind him. He started to turn as there came a crashing blow upon his shoulder. Only the fact that he had started to turn saved him. The blow grazed his face,

fell upon his shoulder, and sent him stumbling through the garage door. Losing his balance, he went crashing down upon the floor. Half stunned, he heard the door being slammed shut and the lock being snapped into place.

He was not hurt, though a sharp pain ran down his shoulder. For a moment he lay upon the cold, concrete floor, then stumbled slowly to his feet. As he staggered upright, he heard a noise in the adjoining garage, the sound of someone who was making no effort to deaden his footsteps. Suddenly there came the noisy sputter of a motor. For a moment it sputtered and spit, then settled down to a steady roar. Next, Mannars heard the sound of the garage door being closed.

Just what it was all about he could not decide. His first idea had been that the person who had assaulted him was driving away in a machine, but the garage doors had been closed, and he could still hear the machine in the next stall. Its engine was running at a rapid speed. The noise rumbled and reverberated through the garage. Why had the machine been left running?

The flashlight was in his pocket. Nervously he brought it forth and slipped on the catch. The garage sprang into view, but there was little to see. He was in an empty stall, one whose floor was clean. Above him, fifteen feet to the rear, was a small window. He observed that it was closed. On each side, the stall was formed of heavy boards, and he noticed that the sides were not absolutely enclosed. The boards ended several

feet below the roof and there was also a foot of clean space at the bottom. For a moment he stared at the side of the garage; then he gave a sudden start.

In the garage next to him was a car whose motor was running. He could not open the door, for it was locked. As he thought this he turned and eagerly tried the catch. The door would not budge. A hurried examination of the boards showed that it was impossible to pull them away without some sort of a strong tool. There were no tools in the stall. Above was a window, but it was too high to reach and there was no way to climb up to it. And in the next garage he could hear the steady roar of the running motor.

The sound was deafening. He knew now why the man had started the car—realized why he had gone out and locked the door, leaving the engine running. Every second the space was being filled with carbon monoxide thrown off from the exhaust of the engine. The only place it could escape to was the next garage, through the open space at the top and the bottom of the boards forming the sides. Long before morning the gas would kill him, kill him just as surely as would a bullet through his heart.

It was characteristic of Harley Manners that his next thought should be one of chagrin. He was angry at his own stupidity, which had been the cause of his being taken at a disadvantage. Then, perhaps because he was a psychologist, he leaned for a moment against the garage door to think over his predicament. Think first, then act, was his motto. He knew it was time he started to do some real thinking.

The engine of the car was throwing off carbon monoxide, but it would be some time before the gas could fill the space he was in. It would first fill the stall in which the car stood; then it would slowly seep through the openings. There was not very much time in which to act. The gas was a deadly thing, acting swiftly, without giving its victims any warning.

Throwing the beam of light around the narrow space in which he was imprisoned, he let it come to rest upon the window. A thought had come to him. He could take off a shoe and smash the glass. That would avoid the danger from the gas. But he saw at once it would do no good to hurl a shoe at the window. It was covered with wide strips of iron placed so that he could not hit the glass.

Again the light went searching into the corners of the garage. There was nothing upon the floor except two empty oil cans. Something caused him to walk over to the corner and look behind the tins. There he saw, upon the floor, a piece of rope. He picked it up as an idea flashed into his mind.

It was not a long piece of rope nor was it new. As he tested its strength he decided it would do, knew it must do. With the rope in his hands he looked above. The roof sloped a trifle, with three cross beams running from end to end as a support. They were about twelve feet above his head and one only a little way from the window. Though there was no time to spare, he silently studied both the window and the beams.

Stepping back, he threw the rope upward, trying to

make it fall across the beam which ran close by the window, but his aim was poor and the rope fell back upon the floor. Again and again he tried, until, at the seventh attempt, it fell over the beam. Reaching the other end, he made a slip knot and pulled it tight.

He had tested the rope and thought it would hold his weight, but to climb up to the cross beam was far more of a task than he had anticipated. Several times he gained a few feet only to slide back to the floor. At length he was able to reach the beam with one hand and after much struggling, pull himself upon it. Even then he would have to be careful if he did not wish to fall upon the floor. In front of him, three feet from the cross beam, was the window. Pulling himself into a sitting position, he placed his feet on the rear wall of the garage for support. Reaching forward, he felt the cool iron bars of the window with his fingers. From instinct more than from anything else, he closed them around one of the bars and gave a pull. The iron bars began to move toward him.

So unexpected was this that he almost fell to the floor. Catching himself after a struggle, he waited until his balance was restored, then looked again at the glass. The light of the flashlight revealed that the iron bars were not set into the window. Instead they were upon a hinge, and the lock which should have been in place had vanished.

It took but a second to fling the iron bars back. A hand went fumbling for the catch on the window. Finding it, a push threw the window open. As the cool night

air came sweeping into the garage Manners gave a sight of relief and even trembled. He had feared the deadly gas more than he had dared to admit.

He was not yet out of trouble, but he did not move for awhile. Balanced upon the beam, he gulped in deep breaths of the cool air. Through the window he could glimpse the dark outlines of a fence. To reach it would not be easy; it would require careful balancing. In the end he swung his body out of the window and touched the top of the fence with his toes. Out of breath, he seated himself on the top of the fence to get his bearings. Far behind him was a house, and from a window a light streamed out into the night. From within the garage came the sound of the running motor. As he heard it he gave a slight shudder, but it was no place to think over what had happened. That could come later. Pulling himself to his feet, he stretched his hands out to the side of the garage. With that for support, he walked the fence to the end of the building.

Here he cautiously looked around the side of the garage. Above his head shone the faint moon. Far ahead he could make out the outlines of the house, a black, solid mass against the darkness. No suspicious sound came to his ears. He could hear the lake pounding upon the shore, and the soft murmur of the wind through the distant trees, but that was all. Dropping from the fence, he stood in the shadow of the garage. There was nothing he could do but go home. Suddenly he felt very weary and, as his hand touched the suit beneath the raincoat, he realized that it was torn. For the first time in many moments a smile passed

over his lips as he thought of the picture he must make.

Suddenly the darkness was broken by a light. It came from the front of the garage. A bulb over the front of the door had been turned on. Evidently it could be turned on from Hurd's house, for he was certain that no one was in the place. Then he heard someone coming down the driveway, listened to the crunching of gravel under the coming feet.

Surprised, he darted to the space formed by the back of the garage and the fence. Who was approaching? The individual was in no hurry, for the footsteps were slow. If he could only see who it was. An idea came to him. As it did, he pulled himself back upon the fence.

Whoever was coming down the drive was on his way to the garage. There must be a window in the stall of the machine whose motor was running. When the man opened the door he would switch on the lights. From the fence it would be possible to look into the garage. Manners could think of no other way to catch a glimpse of the individual.

Edging along the fence he paused by the unopened window. He could hear the roar of the motor of the car in the stall below. With his face pressed close against the glass he stared down in the darkness, until the door opened and the garage was suddenly lighted up. He was surprised by what he saw.

Down upon the concrete stood a tall, extremely thin individual, a man around fifty. The face was not over pleasant, the lips being far too thin and the ears a

little too large. There was a startled expression upon the long face. The man was looking at the car as if he could not believe what he was seeing and hearing. The lips moved. Then, with a start, the man walked over to the machine, opened the door and shut off the engine.

Manners had not expected to see his next door neighbor come into the garage. Hurd amused him a little and at the same time he felt a little sorry for the man. All his money had not given him happiness. About the only joy he took in life was using his power to put over reforms which interested him. Bigoted and repressed, was what Manners thought of him. He had not expected Hurd would be the one who would open the door.

Gazing through the window he watched him look the car over carefully and examine the stall. In the end he turned off the light and there came the sound of the door being shut. Manners decided he would remain where he was for a few moments. If Hurd had been startled by discovering that his car was running, he would look about very carefully. To be seen was the last thing Manners wished. As he thought of this he realized that if Hurd looked behind the garage his figure would be outlined above the fence, so he dropped down to the ground on the opposite side.

It was time to go home. Whatever had been the motive behind the attempt upon his life, he could not solve it at this hour. His thoughts ran in a jumbled manner through his brain. As he started to grope his way through the darkness, he resolved not to do any think-

ing until he had reached the house. He would be in a better mental condition then.

Through a field, where the long wet grass brushed against his legs, past trees whose slippery fallen branches tried to trip him, he groped his way. It was with a sigh of relief that at last he saw his own house loom up before him. The lights seemed very peaceful, streaming out into the night. As he passed the kitchen on his way to the porch, the dog started to bark. He sighed. If only Satan had been with him during the past hour.

In the hall he flung his hat and coat upon a chair, then stood for a moment studying his reflection in the tall hall mirror. He was a sad looking object. The gray suit was a mass of wrinkles, wet and sodden from the grass and general moisture. One sleeve of his coat was half torn away and his face was covered with dirt. So dejected was the face the glass threw back at him that he had to laugh.

But as he came into the living room he realized that he was very tired. Out in the kitchen the dog was barking and he went to the door to let the animal join him. After the first leap the Airedale began to smell suspiciously of his legs. Brushing him aside, Manners sank down with a weary sigh in the chair beside the desk.

Relaxing, with his feet stretched far out, he sat motionless for a few moments. Then his eyes fell upon the desk. Close beside him was a silver tray, with the pinched back bottle and the two glasses. He smiled as his hand went reaching out. The drink he poured was a large one; he felt he needed it, needed it badly.

Then, after the first sip of the Scotch, he started to run over in his mind what had taken place.

Someone had tried to kill him; that was certain. If he had been unable to get out of that garage the poisoned gas from the exhaust would have finished him in a short while. But it seemed such an absurd thing to have happened, an episode having no reason or sanity behind it. As he cast a glance at the wet suit, he shook his head. It had happened, and had come perilously near to being a tragedy.

Why? That was the question. That anyone should wish to take his life seemed incredible. No doubt, while he had followed the man, he had been observed, but that was no reason for what had happened. He did not know who the individual was. Then came another thought. He doubted a trifle if his assailant had recognized him.

He thought of this for a moment. Then a little shiver ran over him. With a start he drained the glass at a gulp and rose to his feet. Pouring another drink and hastily finishing it, he started for the hall. It was time to get out of his wet clothes. The shiver of cold which had run over him told him that. As he went up the stairs he called to the dog to follow him. As he thought of that dark garage, heard again the sound of that running engine, he came to one decision; for one night anyway the seventy pound Airedale would sleep beside his bed.

CHAPTER IV

It was the sun which awakened Manners the next morning. For a while, half asleep, he gazed languidly around the room. Close by the open window lay the dog, his big brown eyes never leaving his master's face. As Manners yawned, the Airedale rose and trotted over to the bed. After thrusting his nose against the face upon the pillow, he walked over to the door. Sooner or later his master would take him for a swim.

For awhile, without thinking, Manners lay looking out of the open window. A slight breeze caused the yellow curtains to billow out into the room, a room filled with sunshine. Out on the lawn he could hear the birds, robins, whose conversations were broken by the calls of the gulls who had followed the rivers from the sea. It was a glorious Sunday morning, he thought, just the sort of a day in which he loved to loaf.

As he sat up in bed a slight stiffness caused the memory of last night's escapade to flash through his mind. Soberly his glance traveled over to the suit he had tossed in a chair. It had been a good suit once, rather expensive, and he had always liked the soft gray material, but it could not be worn again. Now it was a soiled, crumpled mass of fabric, with one sleeve torn and ripped.

As he looked at it, the recollections of the night before swept over him. Again he could hear the loud roar

of the motor, picture the empty stall from which he had escaped. His face grew long as he realized that he had escaped death by a narrow margin. And it would have been an absurd, silly death, without any reason for it. As he thought this his face grew serious.

What was behind it—that was the problem. That someone should have tried to kill him was unthinkable, but the attempt had been made. There was no reason for it, not the slightest cause in the world. No doubt it had been the act of some unbalanced individual, but as he thought this he shook his head. Psychology was his specialty, and he knew that, in the mind of the individual who had started the motor in the closed garage, there had been a reason for wishing him out of the way.

Throwing back the bed clothes, he walked over to the dressing table. Taking a cigarette from a silver box, he slowly lighted it, then stood silent. Last night he had seen a dark shadowy figure hiding behind the hedge, someone who had been very much interested in the coupé out on the road, that car upon whose seat was a dead woman.

What was the relationship between that car and what had taken place after the garage door had been closed upon him? Could the doctor be wrong; was it possible the woman had not met a natural death? It seemed hardly possible. Remington had said he would stake his reputation upon the cause of death. Remington's reputation might be higher than the man deserved, but—and then he slowly shook his head. To think further along that line was absurd.

Going to the window he pulled aside the curtain and looked down at the lawn. Under the bright sunlight, the grass was a vivid green, broken here and there by colorful flower gardens. Tall elm trees, whose leafy tops towered far above the roof of the house, broke the wide expanse of lawn. Through the trees, he could glimpse the lake, its surface a calm motionless mirror of sparkling blue.

He stood by the window until his smoke was over. The week of rain and wind was over, and there had come one of those rare days which one meets only once or twice in a summer. The faint breeze which swept his face was but the slightest stirring of the air. The sky was clear, and he almost decided he could make out the faint vague outline of Canada, a coastline thirty miles across the lake.

Turning, he hastily put on a bathing suit and, with a command to the dog, hastened out of the house. With loud noisy barks, the Airedale went leaping across the grass, hurrying to the shore. In a second he had plunged into the water and, as his master followed, both headed out from the shore.

A hundred yards from the beach, Manners turned to float on his back. Overhead the sky appeared to have no depth or substance, as not a cloud broke the soft misty blue. Turning his head he followed the curving shore line until it was lost in the distance. Far down the beach children were playing upon the sand, their voices pealing forth in loud shouts of laughter, and through the trees he could make out the outline of Hurd's house.

He studied this for a while. The house stood upon the high bluff, and its front was partly hidden by trees. On the shore was a boathouse, and a motor boat was tied to a long brown wharf. Behind the house stood the garage, and he could not keep the building out of his mind.

Though he knew Hurd, yet he had never seen much of his next door neighbor. It was only every other year that Manners opened his summer home, while Hurd lived in his house the year round. His neighbor was not the type of individual he would have enjoyed having as a friend. For that matter he had heard he had few friends in the city.

But that Hurd could know of what had happened in his garage, he doubted. There was a cruel bigoted streak in the man's make-up, but that was no reason he should suspect him of having anything to do with the attempt which had been made upon his life. True it had taken place in Hurd's garage, and he had seen the man walk down to the building, but there had been no attempt at secrecy in his manner, and he had been surprised at the sight of his car with its engine running. Thinking this, he heard his name called from the house, and knew that breakfast was ready.

It was a quiet meal, served by the colored woman who acted as his housekeeper. Because of the sunshine, she had set the table out on the porch and the meal was served in the glass-enclosed sun-room. As he ate, he could look down over the green lawn and see the smooth waters of the lake. Again and again his

eyes left the Sunday paper, to drink in the calm soft beauty of the morning.

He had half expected the local paper would have something to say regarding the woman whose body they had discovered, but it contained not a single word. Evidently, for some reason, Rogan had not given out the story. Perhaps he was keeping it back for the Monday edition. He decided to call up the chief and tell him of the experience he had gone through. Rogan would be rather startled, and he half chuckled as he thought of what would be said.

When, after breakfast, he tried to use the telephone, it was to discover that the line was out of order. Try as he would, he could get no response, and at last he gave it up as a bad job. As he had a telegram to send, it would mean driving into the city. But he became a philosopher and decided he would enjoy the ride.

It was just ten o'clock when he ran the long blue roadster out of the garage. On the seat beside him sat the dog, a picture of contented ease. Ever since that day he had first climbed into an automobile, the Airedale had claimed the seat beside his owner. No matter how far they might drive, or how long they were in the car, the dog enjoyed it.

Manners' house was just seven miles from the heart of the city. The summer colony lay mostly inside the city lines, taken in for purposes of taxation. As he drove out of the yard, Manners was surprised to see the police patrol down the road, their motor cycles parked at the spot where they had found the woman.

His first thought was to stop and see what they were doing, but he decided not to do so.

He always enjoyed the ride into town. The road ran a twisting route through high hedges and past wide expanses of close cropped lawns. Through the trees could be seen the houses, the large rambling summer homes of the rich. Every few hundred yards would come a driveway, down whose length could be seen long orderly rows of trees. Everywhere were flower gardens, their circles of bright color breaking the vivid greenness of the grass.

He knew most of the summer people and liked them. It was the lake which had made the city a summer resort, the lake and its winding shore line. There were miles of sandy beach broken here and there by high bluffs. Little creeks found their way down from the hills to vanish in the water of the lake. Bathing was good, fishing better, and, for those who wished, Canada was but thirty miles away.

He drove into the city by a back street. Past dingy broken down houses, along the side of a rusty railroad track, traveled the blue car. One side of the street was lined with long brick factories, with a coal yard at almost every intersection. Nor did the street improve in looks as he drew nearer the center of the city. He bumped over a rough railroad track, turned past a coal yard, then, two blocks farther on, stopped in front of a new railroad station.

The telegram sent, he climbed back into the machine. Deciding to stop at the police station, he turned down the main street of the city. He had never liked

State Street, and he liked it less this morning, when it was almost deserted, a street of low brick buildings, filled with chain stores, and once in a while a cheap clothing establishment. A cheap street, he thought, one getting cheaper every year.

Driving around a small park, he came to a stop in the rear of the police station. The brick building had been built shortly after the Civil War, and housed not only the police force, but the city government as well. The mayor was on the first floor, while below, in what was really a basement, was the office of the police chief. When he entered the room, he discovered, however, that Rogan had not yet come down to his office.

He refused an invitation to wait and went back to the car. Sinking down on the leather seat, he did not start the machine for a moment. He was bored, a little nervous, and wanted company. If he could only find someone to play golf with, the question of how to pass the afternoon would be settled. Then he thought of Robert Ranson. True the artist would be at church, but there might be time to see him before the service started.

A glance at the clock on the post office across the street, showed it lacked seven minutes to eleven. Church service started on the hour. Backing the car, he circled the park, then turned down the leading residential street of the city. For two blocks he drove past old-fashioned houses, to stop before a small granite church.

As he climbed down to the ground, he wondered why it was that churches always had to be so ugly. The

building he was entering was someone's rather vague idea of what a church should look like. The building was small, the type of architecture a sad mixture of several periods. Ivy climbed up the sides of an odd looking tower, from whose top came the shrill notes of a brassy bell.

When he came into the rather bleak entrance, he judged that service had started. As the people who brushed by him hastened through the swinging doors ahead, he heard the soft low strains of the pipe organ. Going up two steps, he paused before the swinging doors. Through the glass of the upper half he could look into the church.

The church was half filled. Women made up the bulk of the congregation. The men he observed were well dressed. It was supposed to be the most liberal religious group of the city, with a congregation made up of cultured and educated people. As he thought this he half smiled, wondering why more of them did not turn out to hear their minister.

Looking through the glass he saw the spare nervous figure of his friend. For some unknown reason, while he was in Westland, Ranson acted every Sunday as an usher. As he came down the aisle, Manners observed the amazed expression which swept over his friend's face when he glimpsed Manners through the door. To the raised finger Manners shook his head, beckoning the artist to come out into the hallway. As he came through the swinging doors, there was a sarcastic smile upon Ranson's face.

"So you are coming to church?," he whispered.

"Nothing like it. Want to know if you can get to the club about three. We can get in some golf—"

The artist expressed his opinion of anyone who would come into a church at service time to ask a friend to play golf. Then with a grin he agreed to be at the club by three. For a few moments they talked, keeping their voices very low. From the church came the strains of the organ, and it dawned upon Manners that the organist was playing the voluntary for the second time. Peering through the glass he saw the choir, noticed also that they were casting anxious glances at a door which opened off the pulpit.

Observing the glances, Ranson gazed into the church, and taking a watch from a pocket he looked at it. A half puzzled expression swept over his face.

"What's troubling you?" Manners whispered.

"The minister ought to be up in the pulpit. It's ten minutes past eleven, and he always goes on the platform before the organist finishes playing."

"Well, it's a nice day, and maybe he thought he would like to play golf."

"No," came Ransom's doubtful voice, as he slowly shook his head, "I saw him come into church about twenty-five minutes ago. He went to his study, and he ought to be in the pulpit now."

Smiling at the nervous look upon his friend's face, Manners made a short retort and turned to leave. The artist was a temperamental individual, extremely nervous, always put out if things did not go as they should. He was nervous now. A smile crossed Manner's face at the idea of anyone being upset because a minister was

several moments late in the pulpit. As he smiled, he heard the organist starting the voluntary for the third time, saw that people were turning in their pews and looking back toward the glass doors.

"Where does he hide himself?" he asked.

"Why, the study is off the pulpit. He comes through that door you see on the platform."

Manners' hand went out to rest on his friend's shoulder. He half laughed as he made a motion to leave.

"All I can see, Robert, is that you must dash out to the study and tell him it's time he earned his salary. Would you break any rules by doing that?"

"I can go down through the basement, and reach the study that way," was the slow thoughtful answer, "but I don't like to disturb him."

The artist hesitated, as if the thought was far from pleasing. With a little shove, Manners pushed him in the direction of the steps. On the bottom landing was a door which evidently led to the basement. As Ranson vanished from sight, Manners decided to wait his return. He remembered that Mrs. Ranson was away, and thought that his friend might be glad to lunch with him.

By the basement door he waited. The sound of the organ came to his ears, and he could tell that the player was nervous. He smiled a little as she skipped a note; then he became serious. He knew the minister and liked him very much, a sincere, educated man, trying to bring a little intelligence and character into a thoughtless world. Maybe he ought to come out to church once in a while—but if the minister only real-

ized how people like himself thought about the affair.

His thoughts were broken by a sound from the basement, an odd sound, of feet which were trying to hurry, and found the task impossible. He could hear someone gasping out broken, incoherent phrases, among which he recognized his own name, a voice filled with horror, trembling with broken emotion, a voice he knew he ought to recognize and yet was unable to distinguish, the sound of a frightened, startled man, trying vainly to form words which would not come to his lips.

Rushing through the door, Manners paused half way down the steps to throw one look downward. Below him was a room running the entire length of the church, a large room filled with many small tables. Then he saw the artist. He was stumbling past the rows of tables, stopping by each one to steady himself. The thin, nervous face was filled with terror; his lips moved but he did not speak. Manners paused for a second, shocked by the unexpected sight; then, taking the remaining steps at a jump, he ran to the artist's side.

"What's the matter, Ranson?" he gasped, as his arm went around the slight figure to support it.

Instead of looking at him the anguished eyes turned and looked back in the direction from which he had come. Slowly they came back to rest on Manners' face. In the look was not only surprise but horror, the gaze of one who had just seen some horrible thing. The pale lips moved for a second, but found it difficult to speak. Then came the stammering words:

"He's dead, Harley, stretched out on the floor of the

study, and upstairs they are waiting for him to speak."

Believing his ears had deceived him, Manners looked at the trembling figure standing before him. Leaning in a helpless fashion against a table, the artist stared back at him, with a questioning appeal on his white face. In the silence that fell they heard the sound of the organ.

"What shall we do?" came the gasping question.

"You must have seated those people in their pews, Ranson. Is there a doctor up there?"

"Remington," was the nervous reply.

Manners could see that what was done he would have to do himself. For the time being the artist could be of no assistance. Turning, he started toward the steps, only to be called back.

"Harley," begged the imploring voice, "get Remington down here at once. Tell the ushers to say that Dr. Wood is ill. Have them dismiss the congregation. Then come back."

Not liking the task before him, Manners went slowly up the steps. He hesitated a second at the glass door. When he opened it every eye in the church seemed to turn in his direction. An usher rose from the back pew and came over to his side. At his request that Dr. Remington go at once to the minister's study, a surprised expression flashed across the face of the well dressed man. It increased with Manner's next remark that the congregation must be dismissed.

As the puzzled usher started up the aisle, Manners turned to hasten back to the basement. Ranson was sitting in a chair and rose as he approached. The attack

of nerves had passed away, and very soberly he beckoned Manners to follow him. Down past the tables they went, through a small kitchen, and up a short flight of stairs. At the door at the head of the steps Ranson hesitated, as though he wished he did not have to go through.

The room they entered was not a large one. Bookcases, whose shelves were overflowing, lined three walls. Prints and a few etchings covered the fourth wall. In the center of the room stood a desk, its surface covered with magazines and pamphlets. Behind it was a chair, which evidently had been recently pushed back. But these things did not hold Manners' attention. There was but one object in the room he could see, something he wished he could turn his eyes from, the silent figure lying in such an odd attitude upon the floor.

The minister was dead, it needed but a glance to determine that. It was likewise evident that death had come swiftly and unexpectedly. Upon the desk lay the manuscript of the sermon which was to have been delivered that morning. A hymn book, its pages open, lay only a few inches away from the manuscript, and a typewritten note had been placed upon the open page. There was no doubt that death had come within the past few moments.

Dropping upon his knees, Manners' hand gently turned the head which he could not see. It was a fine face he looked into, filled with character, with lines of humor around the mouth. But there was a queer expression to the twisted lips, and the staring eyes held

a puzzled, startled look, as though there had been a short warning that life was nearly over.

From the door came a sudden exclamation. Rising, Manners looked at Dr. Remington's round, excited face. Less than twenty-four hours ago they had met under very similar circumstances. A thought winged itself into his mind. It was very odd, one of those queer coincidences which, if he had read about it in a book, he would have found improbable. But it was not the time for irrelevant thoughts. He stood aside for the doctor to pass.

It was a short examination. All knew that none was needed. Slowly the stout physician rose to his feet, to turn an inquiring face to the silent men. As he did so, he slowly shook his head.

"I can't understand it," he said solemnly. "Only yesterday I looked Wood over for life insurance, told him then he ought to live forty years longer. And to think of his being snuffed out like this."

"What was it?" ventured Ranson.

"Oh, I would say a stroke," came the reply.

As he spoke a recollection swept across the doctor's face. He turned to Manners.

"It's the strangest thing," he said. "It's just like that woman the chief discovered last night, the same swift taking off, and by the same thing. It's a stroke all right, but I wonder at Wood's having one. Of course you never can tell about these things, but—"

He was going to continue, but his words were interrupted by excited voices at the door. Men were peering

into the study, men whose faces turned white as their eyes fell upon the still figure on the floor. Questions were being asked by people on the steps, by those unable to get into the room. In the midst of the confusion Manners threw a questioning look back at the floor.

The minister was lying on his side, as if he had suddenly fallen to the floor. One hand was resting upon the leg of the desk and there was something about the groping, outstretched fingers that made him wonder. There must have been a moment after he had fallen in which the clergyman had tried to pull himself upright. At that moment his fingers went clutching out to the desk for support. And the look of startled surprise upon the still face troubled him.

These thoughts were with him as he slowly drove back to his house. He had never known the clergyman very well, but everything he had ever heard about him he had liked. Unmarried, and only forty years old, he had been the best liked minister in the city. Tolerant and understanding, he could overlook the weaknesses of men and women and hated only intolerance and stupidity. He was far too young a man to die.

The sun was warm but for Manners the warmth and beauty had departed. So deeply did he sigh that the dog beside him gave him one startled look and thrust a cold nose against his face. The sigh had come from the depth of his heart. He had been present at two deaths within the past twelve hours, not present when they died, but very shortly afterwards. He felt depressed and very gloomy.

As he walked from the garage to the house he was still thinking. Both the clergyman and the woman had died suddenly, and from the same cause. It was just a coincidence, a sheer accident that he had been present shortly after their deaths. As he entered the house he was uneasy. Why, he could not tell, though he decided that the feeling was only natural. Also, there was one thing he ought to do.

The telephone was out of order when he had tried to use it in the morning. Now, however, he had no trouble in getting the police station. It was Rogan's gruff, heavy voice which answered the ring. Just as soon as he spoke, the chief started.

"Harley, I have found out who the woman was we found last night, and—"

But Manners was in no mood to hear anything about the woman. He had something to say to the chief. It was a private wire he was talking over, and he did not have to be afraid that anyone would hear the conversation, so he broke in on the chief's words.

"Never mind the woman, Rogan," he exclaimed. "Listen to me."

In a few vivid words he pictured the episode in the garage. There came no sound from the chief while he told of following the man to the garage, but when he came to speak of the attack made upon him, the closing of the door and the starting of the car in the other garage, he heard a short, sudden exclamation. Rogan was more than interested.

He almost smiled as he pictured the scene at the

other end of the wire. The chief would have a long thin stogie between his lips, but the stogie would be going out and the receiver would be pressed close to the big ears. He could see the look of utter astonishment upon Rogan's face, so he purposely made the story of his escape from the garage vivid. When he paused there came an excited voice over the wire.

"Harley!"

Again Manners broke in on him. This time his voice was tense and low. He told of coming to the police station and of going to the church. Next he pictured Ranson's horror-stricken face and briefly mentioned what they had found in the study. It was at this point that he stopped. He did not care to talk at length over the wire of what they had seen there.

There came a long silence when he had finished. It was so long that he thought Rogan had put up the receiver. He half started to speak, but it was unnecessary. There came the voice of the chief. It was very solemn, tense with suppressed emotion, and he also had very little to say.

"Harley," came the slow words, "you get down here about four. I want to see you." Then came a pause, broken at last by four words. The words were delivered in an even monotone, but behind the tone Manners could feel a tense excitement.

"Harley, I told you."

As the voice died away Manners heard the receiver go banging down upon the hook. For a moment he stood looking at the telephone. Then he slowly put it

back in place. As he turned there was a puzzled expression on his face. What did the chief mean by that last solemn pronouncement? He had never heard Rogan's voice so serious or so troubled. What did he mean by the expression he had just used, "I told you."?

CHAPTER V

IT WAS just four by the clock on the post office when Manners parked his car in the rear of the city hall. Walking across the pavement he went down a few steps, then walked along the corridor which led to Rogan's office. He paused before the door which bore across its top a sign. The letters were faded and in several places could not be distinguished but there were enough to make out the words "CHIEF OF POLICE." From behind the door came the sound of voices.

As he stood listening he could hear the heavy rumble of Rogan emphatically disagreeing with someone with whom he was talking. The words he could not make out, but there was no mistaking the tone. The chief was angry, and his voice rose and fell as the words tumbled from his lips. Once there came another voice, evidently trying to enter a protest. It was drowned out by a vigorous exclamation.

Manners knocked, but no one seemed to hear. Pushing open the door he entered the room. Being below the street level it was a dingy room, not over well lighted. In one corner stood a steel filing case, and close to the center of the room was a desk. Behind the desk stood Rogan. His red face was flushed, and a hand whose fist was clenched pounded the back of a chair. Across from him sat a young man, who, with a protesting smile upon his face, watched the excited police officer.

Both turned as Manners entered. The speech the chief had been delivering ended. He growled out a greeting and sank down in the chair behind the desk and lighted a stogie. The young man rose to cross the room for a chair. Placing it beside the desk, he motioned to Manners to sit down.

The professor had met the police doctor only once, but he had heard much about him from the chief. Not only was he physician to the police force but he was also coroner of the city. Manners glanced at the finely shaped head, noticed the wide, high forehead. He decided that Drake would not keep his present position long. Soon he would be going into private practice; there was no doubt he would go a long way in his profession.

It was the doctor who first broke the silence. Casting an amused glance at Rogan, he turned to face the professor. There was a pleading note in his voice as he spoke.

"Professor, can't you do something with the chief? He certainly has a bug in his ear."

At the words the stogie was jerked from between his lips as Rogan leaned forward in his chair.

"Maybe I have," he growled out. "Maybe I have. But I know darn well you are going to do as I say. I want an autopsy."

The doctor threw out his hands in disgust. He turned to Manners.

"God knows what Rogan thinks I will find. But he must have an autopsy performed on that woman he found last night. I have told him that by his own words

there is no reason for such a thing. There is not a wound or a scratch on her body. What is more, Remington sent in a certificate this morning. It says she died from a stroke."

As the fashionable doctor's name was mentioned the chief thrust his stogie back between his lips, saying something under his breath. The look on his face caused the coroner to laugh.

"I know, Chief, that Remington is not the best doctor in the city. But he is not a fool even if he is making a fortune patting ladies' hands. He had no chance to go wrong on this affair. I am willing to say he is right. I cannot see why under heaven you insist upon an autopsy. It's silly, and you know it."

Manners saw Rogan's jaw shut tight. As a rule the chief was an easy-going individual, taking things as they came along without ever worrying over anything, but there was a stubborn streak in him. If he once made up his mind to a thing it took a great deal to change it. It needed but a look at the fixed, determined jaw, a glimpse at the gleam in the chief's eye, to know he had made up his mind.

Yet what the coroner had mentioned was absurd. It was not necessary to have an autopsy performed. They knew what had caused the woman's death. One of the best known doctors of the city had seen her. It was true it had been a sudden death, and perhaps there were several questions which ought to be answered, but an autopsy was foolishness. The woman's death had been from natural causes. Both Remington, who had stopped his car to have a look at the body and the coroner

agreed as to the cause. What could Rogan mean? As though reading what was in his mind, the coroner volunteered some information.

"You see, Professor, Rogan is all heated up over some silly letters he's been getting. Someone has been pulling his leg, saying that 'the shadow of evil is over the city,' and also saying 'Wait, Wait!' So the chief concludes he knows more than Remington and is not sure that the woman wasn't murdered."

Without a smile upon his face, Rogan listened to the bantering voice. When the coronor had finished, the chief's hand went out to the desk. Upon its surface lay some papers, typewritten sheets they seemed, from where Manners was sitting, papers which the chief picked up and glanced through as if he were looking at them for the first time. Then he slowly turned his chair around until he faced the two men.

"Here are seven letters," he announced, slowly, "all telling me something is going to happen. They may not mean a damned thing; then again they may. I have a hunch, that's all, have had one all week."

"But Rogan," broke in Manners, "without a doubt those letters were written by some emotionally unbalanced individual with a strong inferiority complex. The mere act of writing the letters relieved his mind. Those sort of people do not commit crimes, not the letter writers. You are foolish to let them bother you."

The police chief had a great deal of respect for the tall young professor, respect mingled with a little awe, but he listened without changing his expression, lis-

tened as a man might to a lecture of which he did not understand one word. When Manners ended, the stogie came from between the chief's lips to be carefully placed on the edge of the desk.

"I suppose you know what you are talking about, Harley, but let me ask you a question. Were you not the bird who once told me that most, if not all, criminals were emotionally unbalanced? You made the remark that no sanely balanced person ever committed a crime, unless it was done in a sudden burst of frenzy. You said all those things."

The professor started to make a retort, only to be stopped by a wave from the chief's hand.

"So it's a fact that unbalanced people, those with inferiority complexes or what was it you said they had, do commit crimes. And you say all those things about the bird who wrote those things. All right, let it go at that. Only, I tell you I have a hunch. And Drake is going to perform that autopsy whether he wants to or not."

"But Rogan, admitting that what you say is true, yet people who write letters, that group who write to newspapers, those who tell tales upon people they do not like, those persons do not commit crimes. They take it out in writing. The next thing you will be saying is that you think the woman was murdered. You know better than that."

"Who killed the minister?" was the short question.

The tone in which the chief snapped out the last words caused Manners' eyes to open wide in astonishment. Something must be wrong with Rogan. But as

his gaze met the cold steely brown eyes which bored back into his own, he was not so sure. Turning, he threw a helpless glance at the coroner, only to have the young doctor shrug his shoulders.

As if he had suddenly made up his mind, Rogan cast away his stogie and rose to his feet. He was a big man with massive shoulders and large hands. For a moment he looked soberly at the two men before him, then, as he spoke, his voice became confiding.

"Boys, you hear a great deal today about science in police work, finger prints, photography and all that sort of thing. They are all good and have their place, but do you know what makes the difference between a good police captain and a bad one?"

He paused to look at them. In the silence came the soft cultured voice of the doctor.

"I suppose we are going to be told next that you are a good police captain, but I will bite. What does make the difference between a good police captain and a poor one?"

"He knows when to play his hunches," was the sober reply.

"I have been worried all week," he confessed. "It was those damned letters. Have had a hunch ever since that first one came in that something was going to happen. And it did. Two persons died."

"Died a natural death," was the dry comment of the coroner.

"Maybe. But I have a hunch. That's all. It may be just a coincidence the woman and Reverend Wood both passed out at almost the same time and from the same

cause. But it doesn't look good to me. If nothing is wrong the autopsy won't make any difference; if there is——"

There was a silence in which Rogan made a sweeping gesture with his hands. It was an expressive gesture, Manners thought, which might have several meanings. He saw the papers on the desk being picked up and then slowly dropped, noticed the fixed, determined angle of the chief's jaw. Inwardly he chuckled a little. There would be an autopsy. No matter what Drake thought of the wisdom of the thing, it would take place. The chief had made up his mind. He decided to have a little fun with him.

"You forget the minister, Rogan. He was in the study about fifteen minutes before the church services, was in perfect health when he went in. Some time during that fifteen minutes he died suddenly and without warning. Why don't you have an autopsy on him also?"

He had expected Rogan to make some quick retort. Instead the chief's eyes gazed coldly into his, an odd glance, determined and suspicious.

"I may yet. That looks strange to me. People who are in perfect health one minute have no right to be dead the next."

The coroner gave a sigh as he rose to his feet. Very slowly he took a silver cigarette case from his pocket. More slowly was the cigarette lighted. Walking over to the hat rack he took down a panama, then walked slowly over to the door. Here he turned and glanced at the chief. An amused smile was playing over his lips, there was an ironical edge to his voice when he spoke.

"It may be strange that people are alive one moment and dead the next, Chief," he said, "but it happens you know, so we will have your autopsy. Thank the Lord we have a good toxicologist in the city. He will be spending the next few hours in my company."

With a wave of his hand as a gesture of good-by he turned to open the door. Rogan's voice followed him, saying he was going back with Manners—something the professor had not known. With the chief's request that he call up as soon as he had finished the autopsy, the coroner left the room. As the door closed, Rogan sank upon his chair and thoughtfully picked up the letters which were on the desk.

"I suppose, Harley," he said slowly, "Drake thinks I'm crazy in ordering that autopsy. Never mind. Perhaps I am. Suppose you give the once over to these seven letters."

As Manners reached out his hand for the letters he felt that Rogan had read the coroner's mind, doubtless correctly, but he made no comment. Without a word he took the rustling papers from the extended hand, then started to read them. There were seven in all, each written on a single sheet of paper. It was an unusual paper, the finest sort of rag stock. He had seen the same high grade paper sold in Paris. It would be rather difficult he thought, to find many stores which carried it. Seemed rather odd to find such note paper in Westland. Not only very fine paper, but he knew it was rather costly.

The seven letters had all been written by the same typewriter. There must have been a new ribbon, for

the impression was unusually black. The machine however, had been out of alignment for the letter "a" was in every case raised a trifle above the others. There was also a flaw in the letter "g," a place where the tail of the letter had been worn away. The spacing of the words was irregular and he judged the contents had been written by one who was not in the habit of using a machine.

There seemed to Manners to be very little in the seven letters to worry the chief. Three of them contained the statement that the shadow of evil lay over the city. All mentioned that the police were unable to reach the most evil of the city's inhabitants. Starting with the first, which said "in seven days," down to the last, which said "one day," they all ended in the same manner. And though several remarked that someone would deal with "evil," yet Manners doubted if they actually contained a serious threat.

There was an amused smile upon his face as he replaced them on the desk. He knew the type of person who had composed them. He had told Rogan that they had been written by some emotionally unbalanced individual. Technically he was right, but he realized that the chief had carried the idea further than he had intended he should. The chief had gotten it into his head that a crime was to be committed, and by a crime he meant murder. He would have to remove the idea from Rogan's mind.

Finding his pipe, he lighted it, then leaned back in the chair. Carefully he pictured the type of individual who might have written the letters. It could have been

a religious fanatic shocked because people were allowed to bathe on the public beaches on Sunday. It might have been someone with a one-track mind whose own particular millennium complex was not accepted. It could have been a score of various mental types.

He tried to make it clear that, as a rule, people who relieved their repressions by writing letters did not commit crimes. There were exceptions of course, but not as many as one might think. The word "evil" appeared to bother Rogan. Manners told him there were a dozen interpretations of the word, depending upon the mental background of the one who used it, reminded him that after all there was nothing in the letters to bother anyone.

The chief listened gravely enough, his eyes never leaving the face of his friend, but to Manners' surprise, when he did speak, he never mentioned the letters.

"That was a wild yarn you told me over the phone. I suppose it was true?"

He was assured very solemnly that it was true. There came his eager voice:

"Harley, you realize someone tried to do you in. Now it can't be they knew it was you. They must have assumed it was someone they had a real reason for bumping off."

Manners shook his head. All day that thought had been with him. No one, no one in the world had any reason to make an attempt upon his life. He doubted himself if the person had known who it was he had shut up in the garage. But as he glanced at Rogan he

knew that the chief did not know all the story. Quickly he mentioned hearing the sound behind the hedge and of seeing the unknown man peering out at the parked cars.

When he had ended, the chief rose to his feet. He sprang up rather quickly for a man of sixty, and took his hat from the desk. Opening a drawer, he transferred a dozen stogies from the box to a pocket. Hesitating, he opened another drawer and brought forth an object which caused Manners to raise his eyebrows, a squatly revolver which went into the pocket of Rogan's coat. Then he turned and walked toward the door, speaking over his shoulder:

"Come on, Harley, we'll go take a look at that garage. What's more, I'm going to ask if he knows anything about it."

The chief was unusually silent as they drove towards the house. Once in a while Manners would throw a look at the sober face beside him. What it showed rather puzzled him. There was no doubt that Rogan was taking the events of the past few hours far more seriously than he should. Then a thought swept through Manners' mind. After all, someone had tried to kill him with carbon monoxide gas. That was serious enough. But he was the one who should be worrying, not Rogan.

The road wound its way past lawns which ran far back from the highway. They could glimpse the houses, the elaborate summer homes of the rich. Every few thousand feet would come a lawn with no hedge. It would be broken by flower gardens, a colorful contrast

against the green of the grass. To their right they were able to get a flashing view of the lake, its surface motionless in the warm calm air.

He half expected Rogan would wish to stop at the place where they had found the woman. He was allowed to drive past, however, to turn down a driveway a hundred and fifty feet farther on. Both sides were lined by trees whose branches formed a leafy canopy far above the car. There was another driveway only a few feet beyond where they had turned. It led to a white colonial house which stood much closer to the road than the others.

Rogan did insist that he must look at the place where Manners had seen the man behind the hedge. Stopping the car they walked through the tall grass. The spot was not difficult to find, for the grass had been trampled into a matted mass. In front of it was a slight opening the hedge, where the branches were separated. Here the man had slipped out to the road.

There was nothing to be discovered, and they returned to the car. As they came to the end of the drive, it separated into two forks running in opposite directions. There was a little incline to the left and a smoothly cropped lawn directly in front of them. Beyond the lawn was the house, before which they stopped the car.

Walking up four steps, they paused on the large veranda. It rambled around the house and was unoccupied. The door in front of them was open, though the screen was locked. With a slight grunt Rogan

pushed the bell and, as its sound died away, Manners turned to take in the view.

At his feet lay the lake, its surface unbroken by even the slightest ripple. To the left the shore curved away in the distance. Close by was a boathouse, running far out into the water. Tied to a floating wharf was an old-fashioned motor boat, an unusually long boat, he thought, one sadly in need of painting. Behind the wharf the ground sloped upwards to the edge of a bluff.

The sound of footsteps within the house caused him to turn. Someone was coming to the door. He could look down the length of a long hall, vaguely make out the furniture in a room to the right of the passage. It was a rather dark hall, he thought. The furniture seemed old and a trifle shabby, about what he would expect to see in this house, even though the owner was the second richest man in the city.

The man who stood behind the screen door would have been imposing if he had been heavier. Too thin for his height, there was a little stoop to the narrow sloping shoulders. Manners had never liked the face which looked out at them, a scowling face, with thin, closely shut lips, a long nose and a rather unpleasant expression in the narrow eyes, the face of a man who showed very clearly that he was not overjoyed to see them. He did not speak and Rogan broke the silence. There was a little edge to his voice as he plunged directly into what he had to say:

"Mr. Hurd, we wished to see you. There is a matter which perhaps you can aid us in clearing up."

The look in the narrow eyes changed. A curious expression swept across the sallow face. He made no reply, but pushing aside the door made a gesture for them to enter. Even when they were in the hall he did not speak. Instead, he led them half way down its length, turning to go into a small room, one whose windows looked down upon the lake. Motioning to the chairs, he watched them as they seated themselves. Now for the first time he spoke, in a voice which had a hint of forced humility:

"I cannot understand, Professor, why you, my neighbor, should feel it necessary to bring the chief of police with you when you call upon me."

It was an odd remark. Just why he should have put the half sneer in his voice Manners could not tell, but he remembered that Hurd had been the leader of the group which had opposed the bringing in of Rogan as chief of police. He knew that Rogan was remembering that fact. He saw him give the man one hurried look as his jaw snapped tight.

There were a few people in the city who had a great admiration for Henry Hurd, but Rogan was not among the number. There were some types of people the chief despised, some even that he hated, and the thin figure sitting in the chair across from him was one of the few people in the world for whom he had both feelings. He partly showed it in his sharp retort:

"It so happens, Mr. Hurd, that Professor Manners did not bring me; he came at my request."

The merchant leaned back in his chair and the long narrow fingers went clasping together. There came an

almost imperceptible shrug of the narrow shoulders, observed by both men who sat opposite him. But the expression on his face did not change, though Manners saw a faint flush dart across his cheeks.

Without wasting any words Rogan told him what had happened in his garage. His voice became cold and edgy as he pictured the attack which had been made upon his friend. It was evident that he cared little for the man sitting across from him. He went out of his way to remind Hurd that it had been an attempt at murder, a word, which, when uttered, caused the merchant to half leap out of his chair.

While Rogan was speaking, Manners' eyes had gone searching around the room. For a rich man, it was poorly furnished. The chairs were far from modern, the few pictures upon the walls being cheap daubs. There was a bookcase against the wall, but not more than a half dozen books stood upon the shelves. The surface of the small desk was cluttered with papers and letters, while the typewriter was an old "blind" machine.

The silence which came when Rogan's voice died away lasted for several moments. Someone moved nervously, his feet making a little rustling noise on the rug. Upon Hurd's face anger played with contempt. The small eyes darted from the chief to Manners, then he turned slowly to glance out of the window. When he did speak there was an angry tone in his voice:

"You cannot be trying to tell me that you expect your incredible story to be believed. I don't believe it."

A spot of red came flaring into Rogan's cheeks. For

a second his fists clenched, then slowly opened. Rising to his feet he took three steps across the floor to halt in front of Hurd's chair. The voice in which he spoke was icy in its cutting coldness:

"What I told you, Hurd, happens to be a fact. No one is accusing you of anything, but I am going to ask you a question. Did you go out to your garage last night and find your engine running? Tell me that."

Slowly the thin figure rose from the chair. He threw a sneering, contemptuous glance at the chief before he replied.

"It so happens I did."

"Why?" was the snapped out question.

"Well, Rogan, you see I dismissed my chauffeur yesterday for drinking." A sneer crept into the cold voice. "If you did your duty, cleaned up the moral pest holes in the city, he would have no opportunity to secure liquor. But it did so happen I went out to the garage around midnight, to see if the place was locked. The engine of my car was running. I thought the chauffeur had turned it on for spite."

Whatever Rogan thought of the reply Manners could not tell. The round face was expressionless as he nodded, but the next second he said that he would like to have a look around the garage, said he felt sure Hurd would be willing to take him there. The merchant agreed with the suggestion, and, to Manners' surprise, made no comment. They had to wait until the desk had been opened and a bunch of keys taken from the drawer.

Forty minutes later they climbed back into the car.

The search of the garage had revealed nothing. True, the open window caused a little shudder to sweep through Manners, as did the sight of the rope, still hanging from the beam, but if Rogan had expected to discover anything, he was disappointed. There was nothing to be found.

As they drove down the driveway, both men were silent. Hurd had displayed a nasty attitude, why, Manners could not comprehend. He had never thought his neighbor knew anything about the assault upon him. He did not think so now. In fact he doubted if the man would even have the courage to resort to violence. Yet he wondered a little at the sharp tone in which he had spoken to them. Hurd had not been overjoyed to see them; that was certain.

When they reached the house, Rogan dropped down into an easy chair on the veranda, while Manners went inside to talk to the colored woman regarding something to eat. As a rule he did not eat on Sunday evenings, but Rogan, no doubt, was accustomed to a supper. He gave instructions that the meal be served in the sun-room.

Back on the veranda he too sank down into a chair and lighted a pipe. The chief was stretched out with his usual stogie between his lips. The dog had come up onto the porch to sink down by his master's side. Far out on the lake an ore boat was steaming slowly towards Buffalo. Robins were busy on the grass, while a squirrel chattered down at them from a branch of a nearby tree.

Manners half opened his mouth to speak, but

thought better of it. Rogan's eyes were closed, but his lips were moving. The red brow was wrinkled a little; Manners saw a grimace pass over his face. Something was on the chief's mind, something which bothered him. He decided to be silent. It was thirty minutes before he spoke and then it was to ask him to eat.

The meal was very silent. Rogan did his best to be cheerful, but as an effort it was a failure. Again and again he would turn and glance back toward the living room as though he was expecting to hear something. Just as the simple meal was over there came the long shrilling of the telephone.

At the sound, the chief pushed back his chair and jumped to his feet. With a shake of his head he refused Manners' offer to answer the phone. In a second he vanished through the door. There came the sound of his voice, at first eager, then doubtful and astonished. Then came a silence, broken by a sharp sudden command, a command which Manners was unable to distinguish.

It seemed a long time before he saw the chief coming through the door, walking very slowly as if he did not care to leave the house. There was a dejected look about his big frame and his eyes were on the boards of the piazza. Slowly he came walking over to the glass enclosed sun-room. A few feet from the table he raised his head and looked at Manners.

It was a long searching look, containing both horror and triumph, a queer look, filled with helplessness. For a second he turned and glanced slowly over the water. His eyes followed the edge of the shore, rested upon

the tall trees, the colorful gardens, a long glance, that of a man wanting to see something restful. Then he turned again, as suddenly his hands went sweeping forth in a helpless gesture.

“Harley,” came his low grave voice, “Harley, you know that woman—” He paused for a second; then added: “That call was from Drake. She did not have a stroke. She died from poison.”

CHAPTER VI

A CURIOUS silence came stealing over the veranda. Down on the lawn was the chatter of birds, the murmur of the leaves of the elms; far out on the lake could be heard the faint exhaust of a motor boat, but up on the veranda a stillness had fallen over the two men, a silence which pressed close and for a moment kept them both from speaking.

As the words had come from Rogan's lips, Manners realized that he was not surprised. Ever since he had driven away from the church there had been with him a hint of impending disaster. He had tried to throw the feeling aside by assuming it was caused by the experiences of the last twenty-four hours. He knew now that it had been anticipation. His questioning eyes met the gaze of the chief. He half whispered one word: "Murder?"

Instead of replying Rogan turned again to look down to the blue sparkling water of the lake. He was not an imaginative man, but the beauty of the scene touched him. Ever since he had received the first letter there had been with him a feeling of threatening evil. What the coroner had whispered over the wire had not startled him, yet he could not positively answer the professor's question. Turning, he looked gravely at his friend.

"He only said that they had discovered she had been

poisoned. What kind of poison they were not certain. Of course there is no real evidence of murder, but—”

He paused to walk over to the nearest chair. Again his eyes swept the wide expanse of the lake. With a sudden gesture he turned.

“Harley, from the moment I saw that woman dead in the car, I decided that she was murdered. I told you a good policeman must know when to ride a hunch. There are some very important questions which will have to be answered, but you wait and see. You will find in the end, murder.”

Manners was not much given to trusting his emotions. He frequently told his students that an intelligent man had but one rule by which he faced life—to act always upon knowledge, not emotion. Yet as he sat across from the chief he realized that down in his heart he agreed with Rogan. They would, eventually, find that the woman had been murdered.

“Have you found out who she was?”

“Yes. That of course was the first detail which had to be attended to. But we went no further than finding out her name. There was no reason to do more than that. She’s a Marjorie Russell, married— My God!”

A startled look leaped across the round face; he took the stogie from his lips. For a moment he appeared too surprised to speak. When he did find his tongue the words came tumbling forth.

“Harley, her husband is a druggist. My detective said they did not get on very well. Humph . . .” and the accent added all that was necessary.

Silently Manners shifted the position of his chair.

For a moment he had forgotten that they were talking about the woman. Again he saw the study in the church, pictured the figure he saw lying upon the floor, that silent figure, who, as death swept over him, had tried to pull himself upright. There was a deep suspicion beginning to form itself in his mind.

"Rogan, what about the minister? Are you going to have an autopsy upon him?"

"Yes," came the slow reply. "I told Drake that must be done. I know it looks foolish. There can't be any connection between the two deaths, but—"

Rising nervously to his feet the chief paced the length of the piazza. The stogie clenched between his teeth had gone out. With a disgusted motion he hurled it far out on the driveway. As he did so he noticed the long blue roadster standing before the closed garage. For a moment he studied the foreign machine as if he had never seen it before. Then he made up his mind. It was necessary for him to be at the police station. There was a long difficult task ahead.

Walking back to Manners' chair he asked him if he would run him back to town. Hesitating, he ventured the hope that the professor would take some interest in the case which was before him, mentioned the fact that he would gain a better insight into the methods of police work than he could discover by reading a hundred books. Then he half laughed. He remembered that a year ago Manners had been very much on the inside of a famous murder mystery.

The drive back to town was a silent one. Twilight was creeping over the lawns. The highway was packed

solidly with cars; any sort of speed was impossible, so, finding a place in the line, they slowly crept towards the city. After the week of rain, the lawns and the hedges were a vivid green, while overhead was a sky containing not the slightest hint of a cloud. If it had not been for the uneasiness within his mind, Manners would have thought it one of the most peaceful Sunday evenings he had ever known. Now, however, the beauty of the evening held no charm.

Ordinarily the mingled state of his feelings would have aroused a professional curiosity as to their cause, but he felt no desire for analysis then. He only knew that every foot the car traveled brought them closer to a tragedy. Why he felt so certain the woman had been murdered he could not say. He knew Rogan held the same opinion, had also an uneasy feeling about the minister's death.

The woman had been poisoned, but when he telephoned the coroner had not know the drug used. She might have committed suicide. As a rule when people committed suicide by the use of poison they drank it. The woman's face had shown no evidence of that having been done.

One thing puzzled him greatly. A hundred feet back of the place where her car had stopped the car had swerved from the road, as if a sudden feeling of weakness had swept over the woman at the wheel. She had managed to bring the car back to the road, only to go off again a few yards farther on. There had been time to throw the gears in neutral, but evidently not time enough to shut off the engine. Death had come sud-

denly, he judged without warning. If it had, then it was murder.

And her husband was a druggist. Perhaps his occupation was just a coincidence, but there were too many coincidences in the things taking place. Strange the minister had died a few hours after the woman, and in the same sudden manner. There came another thought. Dr. Remington had seen both bodies, made the examination. His name would be on the death certificate. A stroke, he said. He had been wrong in one case. Would it turn out that he was wrong in the other?

Manners knew a little more than the ordinary layman when it came to poisons, but after all his knowledge was slight. He tried to figure out what poison could have been used. A poison which would cause a doctor to say death had come from natural causes was rather uncommon. He did admit one thing, however. Remington had made a very hasty examination of the body in the car. In the darkness he could easily have been mistaken. But how about the minister?

They were approaching the outskirts of the city and he needed all of his attention to avoid accidents while driving. After a few blocks he managed to swing out of the traffic to run down through a new development. At the end of a long street he turned to run in front of large expensive houses, which were placed high upon a bluff overlooking the lake. A few moments later they came out by the city park which faced the police station.

When they went into the building, Rogan told him to go into his office and wait. The chief vanished into a

room through whose open door Manners got a glimpse of the night man, and the officer who was on the switchboard. At the end of the corridor he found the door of the chief's room unlocked, and stepped within.

The room was very stuffy and his first motion was to open several of the windows. As they were flung open there drifted in from the street the sound of the Salvation Army Band, opening its evening service on a near-by corner. The room was a little below the street level and upon the sidewalk could be seen the hurrying feet of men and women. As he turned away from the window a cat who was lying on the chief's desk stretched and turned over to be petted. From behind the closed door on the opposite side of the hall came the rumble of voices.

It was some time before Rogan entered the office. When he did it was to hurry over to his desk and pick up the telephone. The conversation carried on over the wire was short and determined. He wanted to see the woman's husband and as soon as possible. Telling his plain clothes man that no matter what the man said he was to be brought to the station, he hung up.

Whirling around in his chair the chief gazed out of the windows. Very methodically he took a stogie from his pocket and lighted it. There was a deliberateness about the action which spoke volumes. As the chair again faced the desk the official's hand picked up a group of papers, the letters he had received during the past week. They were vouched a quick glance, then, with an expression of disgust, he slammed them down upon the desk.

He was about to speak when they heard the sound of someone coming down the corridor. A hand fumbled with the door knob; they watched it slowly turn. As the door opened they saw the coroner coming into the room. Walking very slowly, he placed his hat upon the rack and deliberately selected a chair directly across the desk from his chief. The glance which swept over the two men was momentous in its significance.

Only a few hours before Manners had seen the young doctor leave the room. He had gone out with a careless air of gaiety, his manner showing he thought he was departing upon a foolish errand. There was nothing of this sort now. Instead, the youthful face was very grave; the fingers which took the cigarette from a silver case trembled a little. He appeared tired as if he had just been through some unpleasant ordeal.

He noticed the questioning look upon the faces of the two men. For a moment he did not speak. Then it was only to say six words, delivered with a little shrug of the shoulders:

"I guess you were right, Chief."

There was no triumph on the police official's face as he asked:

"Did you find the poison?"

He leaned forward in his eagerness.

Drake nodded. "Yes." For a second he paused, only to add, slowly, "Curare."

Manners could see that the word meant little to the chief. The expression on his face did not change, though a slight gleam did come into his eye. His head nodded gravely as if he had not been surprised.

"When did she take it?"

"She did not take it, Rogan. It's not that kind of poison. You can drink it if you wish, and it will do no harm; but if it gets into the blood stream, you die. It's perhaps the swiftest acting poison of them all. But she never took it."

The explanation seemed to puzzle the chief. Bewildered, he gazed across the desk at his coroner. Then suddenly he turned to Manners.

"What in the devil does he mean, Harley? She was poisoned he said, but then he says she never took any poison. What is he getting at?"

Briefly Manners told what he knew of the rare poison. It was an arrow poison used by the Indians of South America. Its exact composition was unknown, but scientists were certain it was the juice of a plant, made from the roots, though no plant was known whose juice had the action upon the body which this poison had. It could be taken internally and in such a case was harmless. But let it be introduced into the blood stream, through a scratch or cut, and it killed rapidly. It was rare and rather difficult to secure.

"How long, after it has entered a person's blood, will it be before it takes effect?"

"Very soon," was the reply from the coroner. "Almost at once. Fifteen or twenty minutes at the most. It is unique among poisons in the way it acts. It paralyzes the muscles of the throat and respiratory organs. The person is unable to move, dies from asphyxia."

They could see that Rogan was digesting the in-

formation. Judged from his face, this was the first time he had come in contact with the poison, in all of his police experiences. There was a slight frown over his eyes and he appeared a trifle bewildered. Very slowly he lighted his stogie before he spoke.

"Drake," came his grave voice, "do you think she committed suicide? What do you say?"

The coroner slowly shook his head and there was a very doubtful tone in his voice as he replied:

"I never heard, Chief, of anyone committing suicide by the curare route. It's a rather rare drug, you know, hard to get hold of and that sort of thing. But to be honest I don't know just what to say, Chief. She could have committed suicide, but—"

Manners was running over in his mind the famous poisoning cases with which he was familiar. He had read the accounts of all the cases that were of much importance in medico-legal circles, but he could not remember a single one where curare had been the drug used. What was more, he had never heard of anyone committing suicide in an automobile and selecting curare as the poison. He voiced his thoughts.

"Drake," insisted the chief, "did you find any marks on the woman's body, scratches, or that sort of thing?"

"There was one on the palm of her right hand and also one on her arm. They are not very deep, nor do they seem to be of much importance, but—"

"But," growled Rogan. "You tell me she died from poison. Said it cannot be swallowed, or at least if it were, would not harm her. Now you say they do not use that stuff to commit suicide with. Then she must

have been murdered. She died from the effects of curare, so she must have been scratched with something dipped in the drug. But where—?”

The police physician started to make some reply, only to become silent as a knock came at the door which opened out into the corridor. Rogan's voice called out to the unseen person to come in. The door opened to reveal the short, stout figure of Dr. Remington, and a rather angry, disturbed Dr. Remington.

Before entering the office he threw an indignant look at Rogan. The sight of the coroner and Manners caused the expression upon the smooth face to change suddenly. Closing the door he walked over to the desk. The blond mustache quivered a little, as if he was angry, and the round face was flushed. As no one spoke the doctor started to protest.

“I fail to understand, Mr. Rogan, why you should demand that I leave my patients and come at once to your office. I am not accustomed to being ordered about in the manner in which your policeman gave me your message. It's an outrage and—”

“Oh, sit down,” snapped out Rogan's gruff voice.

So rough was the tone that the red suddenly faded from the doctor's cheeks, as with a half frightened air he took a chair. A nervous hand went reaching down to smooth away a wrinkle from his suit. He appeared not to know what to do with his gray hat, at last placing it upon the floor beside the chair.

Rising to his feet, Rogan looked at the physician. The attitude was that of a schoolmaster about to lecture a stupid pupil. Perhaps only Manners realized that

the chief was just as bewildered as the man he was gazing at.

"What would you say, Remington, was the cause of that woman's death last night?"

"Why, I told you then," was the petulant reply. "A stroke."

"She was poisoned," came the curt retort.

The doctor looked up at the figure standing before him as if he did not believe his ears, but the look upon the stern face told him he had heard correctly. Slowly the pompous little figure rose from the chair and took one hesitating step toward the desk. The round face had turned white, only to have a crimson flush sweep over it as the import of the chief's retort dawned upon him. His surprised voice shook as he tried to speak.

"But, but, Chief," he protested, "she could not have been poisoned." He paused, as though waiting to be assured. Then he stammered out. "Why, how—how do you know?"

"I don't know why nor how," was the grudging reply, "but she died from poison. Drake had an autopsy and Maxwell assisted him. It was poison, curare, they say."

The plump little figure sank helplessly back in the chair. The man's eyes dropped to his feet as though he were seeing them for the first time in his life. Manners saw him bite his lip, knew that the soft white hands were trembling. Then very slowly Remington raised an anxious face. When he spoke, his words were those of a much troubled man.

"I can't understand it, Rogan. I signed my name to

the death certificate and put down that she died from a stroke. It is true I may have been hasty in my examination. I never saw a case of poisoning from curare in my life. The flushed face, the absence of any burns or marks about the lips, made me positive it was a stroke. When the papers get hold of my mistake it will ruin my professional standing." The anxious voice drifted away in despair.

"I think, Rogan," broke in the soft voice of the coroner, "you cannot blame Remington. I would have done the same thing. We doctors very rarely, if ever, see a case from curare. I think you can fix it up with the papers, perhaps not even mention the doctor."

The older physician turned a grateful look upon his colleague. Then suddenly they saw him give a start. His face went very white, only to have the red come flooding back in a moment. With a despairing cry he jumped to his feet, as his anxious glance went nervously over the three men.

"But, Chief," he gasped out. "There's the death of Dr. Wood this morning. I said it was a stroke in that case also. He had the same appearance as the woman. You don't think—"

He was far too horrified to put into words the thought within his mind. Manners knew of what he was thinking, so did the coroner and the chief. The idea was one which they too did not care to put into words. When the silence was broken it was Rogan who spoke, spoke in a voice in which doubt and certainty mingled.

"I don't know, Remington, but I am afraid."

As the chief's voice died away the coroner mentioned

that they should be hearing within a few moments from the autopsy upon the minister. The toxicologist was doing the work and, after the discovery that the woman had been poisoned, was searching for the cause of the minister's death. Just what he was looking for, the coroner did not say, but from the grave tone of his voice, words were scarcely necessary.

No one spoke for a while. In the silence Manners carefully lighted his pipe, and tried not to think. Across from him, with his head in his hands, sat Remington. There was such a dejected stoop to the man's shoulders that Manners felt sorry for him. Behind the desk Rogan stared gloomily over the room. Even the youthful face of the coroner was troubled. In the end the silence was broken by Rogan asking a question. He wanted to know if a druggist would have curare in his stock. Manners knew what had prompted that question, knew also the line of thought which must be running through the chief's mind. He had said the woman's husband was a druggist. Already he had made up his mind the woman had been murdered. He was trying to find a suspect.

The coroner tried his best to answer the question, but the effort was not overly successful. He doubted very much if the ordinary druggist would have curare on his list of drugs. Not only was it difficult to secure, but very rarely was the drug used in medicine. It was the most powerful sedative known and, in the form of a yellow powder, was once in a great while used in tetanus, though not with much success. He had never heard of any doctor in Westland using the drug, a statement with which Remington agreed.

Manners could tell from the expression on Rogan's face that the reply had not been what he expected. There came a scowl; he saw the big head slowly shake. Just as he was about to speak, the silence was broken by the shrill ringing of the telephone upon the desk. In the still room the sound had a sinister note, insistent and threatening.

All eyes watched Rogan's hand shoot out for the receiver. His gruff, heavy voice barked out an eager question. Then his face became fixed and stern. He made no reply to his unseen speaker, hanging the receiver up in a careful fashion. Slowly he rose to his feet, to stare at the watching men. When he spoke his voice was low, as though he had been far more shocked than astonished by what he had heard over the wire.

"That was from Maxwell," he said. "He has just finished his autopsy on the Reverend Wood."

He paused as if not wishing to continue. In the deep silence which fell, Manners heard a noisy buzz of a fly upon the window. From the street there floated in the strains of the Salvation Army Band, playing some jazzy hymn. The sharp warning horn of a car at the corner caused him to start a little. Then Rogan spoke again, spoke very deliberately.

"He found he was poisoned."

Pausing again, his eyes swept the anxious faces before him. Suddenly his arms went out in a helpless gesture. What he had just heard was beyond his comprehension.

"It was curare."

CHAPTER VII

IT was just ten o'clock when Manners dropped down in the chair in his living room. As he leaned back a weary sigh came from his lips. He was tired, mostly a mental weariness, which made his mind a morass of mingled emotions. For two hours they had argued back and forth in the chief's office, repeating arguments which reached no conclusions and failed to satisfy any of the questions all were eager to have answered.

The news which had come ringing over the telephone wire, that the minister had died from poison, had surprised only Remington. The others, had they been willing to admit what had been in their minds, would have said that they were not taken by surprise. Yet it had been a shock, the more so when the chief had said that the same poison had been used in both cases. All had agreed on one thing—suicide was out of the question.

The clergyman had entered his church only fifteen minutes before the morning service. He had gone directly to the study as was his usual custom. Ever since he had been in the city Wood had been known as the outstanding intellectual figure of the community, a clear thinker, liberal and tolerant in all of his viewpoints. Most people liked him. To think that he would stage a spectacular suicide in his church just before the morning service was unthinkable.

Yet they had agreed that murder seemed equally unthinkable. Even if they had decided that Wood had been killed, they faced another blank wall. So far as they knew, no one had entered the study after the minister had gone in. Curare acted very quickly. From the time the clergyman had come into the church to the moment the artist had found the body upon the floor only twenty-five minutes had elapsed. And no one had been in the room.

For two hours they had argued. In the end Manners had risen to his feet and left them. There was a half despairing look on the chief's face as he bade him good night. Rogan was realizing what was before him. Anxious days and nights, with an excited city howling for a culprit, whom first he would have to discover. Perhaps the inquest to be held in the morning would bring out facts they did not know at this moment.

Resolving to forget the two deaths, Manners picked up a magazine. For a few moments he tried to read. In the end he flung the magazine upon the floor. There was nothing in it but mystery stories, accounts of famous crimes, the last thing in the world he felt like reading at the moment. The mystery behind the death of the man and the woman would prove more startling than anything a writer of fiction could present.

It was of no use; his mind was filled with but one thing. Filling his pipe, he turned off all the lights but the floor lamp and leaned back in his chair to think things over. Instead of forcing his mind he allowed his thoughts to run on as they wished. Sooner or later something of importance would flash before him, but

after a while he concluded that this would not happen. There were no real facts to think about.

Was it murder? He came to the conclusion that if one had been murdered, both had. People committed suicide every day, but, so far as he had ever read, they did not pick out curare as the agent. No doubt the drug had been chosen because of the swiftness with which it worked. But it was an odd drug to use in a murder.

There are many causes for murder, but after all they could be placed in four classes. People killed in the heat of sudden passion, for revenge, for gain, or because of some sexual reason. The minister's death, if it were murder, did not seem to fall into any of the four classes. No one would gain anything by killing a clergyman; revenge was not apt to enter in, nor passion. He remembered that there was another classification. That would not do.

Gross, of Austria, was the leading criminologist of the world. Before the war Vienna had the most scientific police system of them all. Gross had published many books upon crime, all masterpieces, though no doubt his "Handbook for Magistrates" was the best known. He had written somewhere that in every murder four questions must be answered. "Who? How? Where? Why?"

Manners thought these over for a while. If one could answer all of the four questions he could solve every crime. In this affair they were able to answer three. They knew who had died and also they knew where and how. But the last—why? There was not the

slightest hint. As he relighted his pipe it dawned upon him that the four questions would depend upon another: Was it murder?

In the end he decided that it was, knowing that the chief of police was of the same opinion. The woman might have committed suicide, but not the minister. That appeared to be out of the question. Having accepted this, he reflected that in both cases the crime had been very skillfully planned, so well planned that there was no evidence as to how they were committed.

He thought of the woman. There had been no coat in the machine, yet all day and during the early part of the evening it had been raining. He assumed that she must have driven from the city, perhaps had left her coat in the house she visited. The fact that no coat had been found in the car might show that she had rushed away from some house, rushed out so hurriedly that she had no time to take her coat. One thing seemed clear, yet it was a startling fact. The poison must have been administered after she had entered the machine. Curare killed quickly, and she could not have driven far after it had entered the blood. The first effects no doubt had been felt where the tire mark showed that the car had swerved from the pavement. That was only a hundred feet or so from where it had finally stopped. She must have received the poison not very far from the place the car had first left the concrete.

Puzzling over this he reached a far more perplexing thought. If she had not committed suicide, which he did not believe, someone must have given her a scratch from which she died. One could drink curare without ill

effects, but let it reach the blood stream, and it was fatal. Of course there must have been someone in the car, no doubt the figure they had seen leap from the running board.

The same conclusions would apply to the minister. Someone must have inflicted the wound from which he died. But as he thought this he slowly shook his head. Ranson had told him that no one had entered the church study but the clergyman himself. In that case he decided there was so little evidence that it was better not to try and puzzle it out.

He had expected that one particular question would sooner or later displace all others in his mind. Was there any connection between the two deaths? It seemed very likely there was. The same poison had been used in both cases, a poison very difficult to procure. The woman had been beautiful but there was something about her face which forced Manners to feel that she could not have known the clergyman. Yet, on the other hand, a popular minister knew all sorts of people.

He gave a sigh as he yawned. Thinking was getting him nowhere. A glance at the clock showed it was long after eleven, but for a few moments he did not stir, wondering about the letters which had so impressed Rogan. It was good thing the chief had been disturbed. If it had not been for what he called "a hunch," no one would have known that the two had been poisoned. Were the letters mixed up in this affair? He decided it was absurd to try and puzzle that out.

Rising to his feet, he called the dog, which had been asleep by the window, and took the animal out to the

kitchen. The blanket was placed on the floor and, as the Airedale slumped down on his hed, his master ruffled the brown head for a moment. Next, he closed the doors, then slowly went to the bedroom. He was very tired, with a weariness he had not felt for many a year. As soon as his head touched the pillows he was fast asleep.

Just what roused him he never knew. One second he had been fast asleep; the next he was wide awake, with his eyes turned to the window opposite the bed, lying tense and watchful with every nerve at attention. In the darkness the room appeared to stretch away into space, and it was several moments before his eyes could distinguish the outline of the window through which came the breeze that caused the curtain to billow out into the room. So sudden had been the awakening that he was dazed by the transition from sleep to consciousness. Vaguely his eyes wandered around the dark room. At first he could see nothing; then, when he had become accustomed to the darkness, he was able to make out the vague shadows of the walls and could pick out the furniture around the room.

The silence was unusual, pressing closely around him with a sinister stillness; in it the faint rustle of the curtain could be heard as it swayed with the breeze, but, save for that, he could hear nothing. Something, however, had caused him to awaken from a sound sleep, some sound which, creeping into his consciousness, had brought him suddenly to life, but he heard nothing now. Sitting up in the bed he sat listening, hoping that whatever had aroused him would come again. There was no

sound within the room, nor did any noise float up from the first floor. A little disturbed, he sat upright in the bed, eagerly listening. Then he half laughed. After all, there could be nothing wrong. The dog would be barking loudly if it had been a noise which had aroused him. But the next second he was not so certain. The Airedale had one odd trait. At times the slightest sound would cause him to growl; then, there were times when if a cannon had been fired off below the room in which he was sleeping, it would not have roused him. He could not absolutely depend upon the dog.

Sliding down between the sheets he turned upon his side. He had just been roused, that was all. No doubt there had been nothing to cause him to waken suddenly, but he had been wakened and he knew it would be a long time before sleep could come again. He had gone to bed, tired out, to fall asleep in a moment. Now he was as fresh as if he had slept for hours. To go to sleep again would not be easy.

He tossed about on the bed for several moments, then got up. Going across to the window he paused, standing in the shelter of the curtains. He glanced out on the lawn. The moon was up and the light came trembling through the trees, to play over the grass. The yard was a mixture of light and shadow, bright spots mingled with dark shadowy outlines, outlines of blackness cast by the trunks of the trees and masses of shrubs.

Hidden behind the long curtains he stood peering out into the night. Beyond the lawn he could glimpse the calm expanse of the lake, its surface a mass of sparkling silver in the moonlight. The shore curved away in

a long dark outline to become a mass of dark shadows lost in a tree-covered peninsula. To the left, he was able to see the edge of his garage, its sides gleaming white in the moonlight.

It was a warm night, and even the slight breeze which drifted in through the open window contained no coolness as it swept over him. Again he felt the uncanny silence unbroken by even the slightest sound. For a while he studied the calm peacefulness which lay below. Then, with a sudden resolution, he started to walk back to the bed, but he did not walk across the floor. As he started to turn from the window he suddenly paused, startled by something he had seen out on the lawn. Whirling, he pulled the curtain around him as he peered eagerly downward.

On the lawn, almost fifty feet away from the house was a clump of shrubbery, half circling a small garden. The garden itself could be seen plainly, but behind the shrubs lay a pool of shadows, broken in their outline. It was a sheer accident that as he started to turn away his eyes had fallen upon this spot, but they had; what is more, he had seen something move behind the shrubbery.

As he gazed down upon the shadowy gloom a little shiver of excitement ran over him. His hand went shut as he tried to pierce the darkness with his glance. Below him stretched the lawn, a place of mingled light and shade, and behind the shadowy outlines of the shrubbery was a darker outline, which had moved suddenly.

Someone was down on the lawn hidden behind the shrubs, someone who was looking towards the house. As

he studied the shadows he was able to pick out the outline of a man, half crouching, whom he had seen move once, and who, as he looked, moved again, a man who was looking up at his window, glancing toward the curtains behind which he was hidden.

His first thought was that his eyes had deceived him. Trying to pierce the shadows he stared down at the lawn. He was right; someone was behind the shrubbery. As he looked he saw the figure half rise to dart over to the shelter of the nearest tree trunk. At the same moment he heard the sound of an automobile turning in from the road to his drive.

Whoever was driving the car made no effort at concealment. The horn was honking noisily as the machine came on. Watching, he could see the gravel drive become light under the illumination from the headlights. A long, expensive looking roadster came to a stop before his door, as someone tumbled out of the car and started for the veranda. Then from the kitchen came the loud threatening bark of the dog.

Manners was on his way to the first floor as the doorbell rang. The ringing did not cease; it sounded as though the person at the door had not taken his finger from the button. Manner had grabbed his revolver out of a drawer before leaving the bedroom and, with the gun clutched firmly in his hand, went rather slowly down the long staircase. With the shrill ringing of the doorbell, never stopping, and the dog barking incessantly in the kitchen, he went to the front door.

Pushing the button which turned on the porch light, he paused as his hand went reaching for the door-

knob. Then he made up his mind. He had seen a figure dart from the shelter of the shrubbery and run to the shelter of the trees. No doubt it was the car that caused this action. Who could be ringing his doorbell at this hour of the night he did not know, and was thinking this as he slowly turned the knob. Standing to one side with the gun held firmly in his hand, he threw the door open. Under the light stood a young man, a tall young man dressed in a costly gray suit and wearing a necktie of vivid colors, a man whose blond hair was not covered by a hat and whose pleasant face was wearing a broad grin. He gave Manners one look, then, with a loud yell, threw both arms around his neck.

There was many a person whom Harley Manners called a friend, but no one was closer to him than the blond haired young gentleman who, with a broad grin, followed him into the house. Nor was there anyone who could have startled him more by appearing at his door at two o'clock in the morning than George Carter. He had thought that at this moment Carter was in Europe.

There were people who, whenever Carter's name was mentioned, smiled a little, people who believed that the tall young gentleman spent far too much time on his clothes and had far more money than any young person should have. They would have laughed loudly at the idea that Carter ever had a serious thought, or that it was possible for him to be interested in any sort of work, and some of these people thought they knew him rather well.

In Washington, however, there was a stern faced

gentleman who could have told one, though he never would have mentioned the fact, that George Carter was the best man in his department. Just what it was that his friend did in the Secret Service, Manners did not know. Carter would give voice to his opinions upon everything at any time, but there was one thing he never spoke about, the work he did for the government.

For a startled moment, Manners could only look at his friend's face. What Carter was doing in his house, he could not understand, but there was no one that, at this particular moment, he was more glad to see. He started to speak, to voice the questions in his mind, but the effort was of no avail. With a grin lighting up his face, Carter clapped him on the shoulder.

"Well, old man," he said, "I thought you would be surprised. I've had a long ride, six hundred miles from New York. Do you happen to have a bite to eat in your icebox?"

While his host hastened to put a cold lunch on the kitchen table, Carter rattled on like a magpie. He had a vacation—a long one. Part of it would be spent with Manners; then perhaps his friend might be willing to take their long-talked-of fishing trip. He had discovered, after a telegram had been returned, that the professor was at his summer home. For that reason he had wished to surprise him. Even as he ate his cold chicken and drank the bottle of wine, he was not silent. Care never remained very close to Carter. In all he said or did, there was an air of lightness. Even the blond little mustache, which at first glance seemed a silly

line above his lips, was soon forgotten by those who knew him. And he could not keep still very long.

As his voice rattled on, it dawned upon him that Manners was troubled. There was a worried look behind the dark eyes, an expression as if they had looked upon something unpleasant. Once in a while he saw a shadow pass across the pleasant face, followed by a nervous trembling of the lips. Something was wrong, for it was not like Manners to be glum, and he was unusually silent, especially for a man whose best friend has unexpectedly arrived.

A bottle of Barsac had been placed on the table and Carter slowly poured the white wine into a glass. For a moment he studied the straw colored liquid, raised the glass to his lips and took a long careful sip. Then with a sudden gesture, he placed the glass on the table as he turned to his friend.

"What's the matter, Harley? I expected you would have a band out to meet me, but instead,—” and he gave a long sigh.

Crossing the floor, Manners took a cigarette from a package lying on a shelf. When the first trickle of smoke had been blown to the ceiling, he gave Carter a long reflective look. The sight of that figure behind the hedge had troubled him far more than he would have liked to confess. Not that he had been afraid, but the episode of the garage still could make him shudder. And now this had happened.

Sitting down in the chair which he had drawn close to the table, he started to tell his story. There was a dramatic touch to his words, as he went on from the

beginning, ending with the description of the figure he had seen crouching under the shrubbery. It was very realistic. Not once did Carter break in on him; instead, with a sober air of a judge studying a lawyer presenting a brief, he gravely listened. It was not until Manners finished that he spoke.

"I don't know what you have been doing, Harley," he half laughed, "but it's evident I came at a good time. Somebody is after you, of course. But why? That's your problem."

For thirty minutes the men argued back and forth. Carter insisted that, if Manners had told his story correctly, the woman and the minister had been murdered. He was positive that the attack in the garage, the shadowy figure Manners had seen on the lawn, were connected with the death of the man and the woman, but of this Manners was not so sure.

In great detail he insisted that he had not seen the face of the man who had been hidden behind the hedge. He had not the slightest bit of knowledge as to who might be responsible for the woman's death, could see no reason why anyone should have tried to kill him. As for the figure out on the lawn tonight, what the man was after was beyond him. As he finished speaking, Carter glanced at his wrist watch and, as though shocked by the time, rose to his feet. He noted the disturbed face of his friend and a sober expression crept into his own. Taking one step, he placed his hand on Manners' shoulder.

"Well, Harley," he said, "it looks as though you had run into a jolly sort of a crime. Ought to please

you, for you know you are very keen on that sort of thing. But let's forget it till tomorrow."

Manners was willing to forget it if he could, but when they left the kitchen the dog went upstairs with them. Taking Carter's bag, after his offer to put the car in the garage had been refused, he showed him a sleeping room across from his own. They were both weary and no time was lost in further conversation. With a good night they turned in to their respective rooms, the dog dropping down on the hallway rug.

As Manners stood soberly looking around his room he realized that he was thankful for one thing. No longer would he be alone in the house. There was a strong imaginative streak in his make-up, and he realized that the sight of the figure on the lawn had disturbed him. It was the mystery back of it that he did not like, what might be behind it all. But just before he went to sleep he smiled. He was no longer alone. His best friend would help him to discover what it all might mean.

CHAPTER VIII

BREAKFAST the next morning was a merry meal. Manners was down on the lawn by nine, only to discover that his friend was still sleeping. He was not surprised. There were two things in which his fair haired friend had established a well deserved reputation. He hated to go to bed and never had been known as an early riser. At the last moment he would come leisurely down to breakfast, dressed as a fashion plate.

It was a calm morning without a breath of air to rustle the leaves of the trees. From the warmth of the sun it promised to be very hot, and the lake wore a shining, glassy look. Robins were everywhere, so tame they barely made an effort to run out of the way as he walked over the grass. The dog was running back and forth upon the shore, barking an invitation to his master to come for a swim.

There was only one place on the lawn that held any interest for Manners. Fifty feet from the gravel driveway was a small flower garden. Pansies of all hues filled it to overflowing. Along the edge of the garden ran a line of shrubs almost four feet in height. More than once he had decided that he would have them cut down. Now, as he walked over the grass, he knew that before he went to town the gardener would be told to remove them.

There was space for a man to hide behind the shrub-

bery. He threw a glance up to his bedroom window, a direct line from the garden. Walking behind the green shelter he saw the marks of footprints in the soil. Faint, indistinct marks they were, but evidence that his eyes had not deceived him. Someone had been hiding behind the shrubbery. The figure he had glimpsed running to the shelter of a tree trunk had been no illusion.

Puzzled, he stood looking down at the faint footprints in the dirt. Faint though they were, they told their story. Someone had been standing there, waiting in the darkness with his eyes upon the house. The lights of Carter's car had caused him to run for shelter. But why? That was what Manners could not understand. That he should have an enemy seemed incredible. After all, he knew only a few people and they, like himself, were simply summer residents.

The sound of Carter's voice caused him to start back toward the house. He found him upon the veranda dressed in a suit which, from its freshness and the manner of its pressing, had evidently never been put on before. From the tie to the studs in his shirt everything matched. To look at him one would never have known it was after three when he went to bed. The smooth skin had a pinky softness and the close cropped golden mustache set off the smiling lips.

At the sight of his host Carter loudly and persistently insisted that breakfast was what he needed more than anything else. Under his arm was the morning paper, and Manners was able to see the great black headlines running across the front page. Seeing the look, Carter gave him the morning paper, understanding his friend's

interest. As they walked into the sun-parlor he watched Manners as his eyes skimmed the headlines.

The death of the clergyman had shocked the town. In black type, which ran across the front page, the news was announced, but, after they were seated and he had read the news story, Manners wondered at the restraint with which it had been written. That there were any suspicions that the death was not a natural one could not have been told from the paper. Several columns dealt with the man's position in the community, one which had been not only extensive but varied. There seemed not a thing touching the civic life of which Wood had not been a part.

It was a skillfully written article, concealing far more than it revealed. That there was suspicion of either suicide or murder was not even hinted. Only one incongruous statement could be found, a mention that an inquest was to be held at ten-thirty. When Manners dropped the paper to the floor to turn to his breakfast he decided that the chief had taken advantage of his position. The article had evidently been written at the suggestion of the police department.

It was a happy meal. Carter was in rare good humor, talking far more than he was eating. While dressing he had endeavored to analyze the story Manners had told him upon his arrival. It was a task beyond him. When he came down to breakfast he saw that his friend was still troubled. He set to work to dispel the feeling.

So well did he succeed that it was with a start Manners saw that it was shortly after ten o'clock. The inquest was to start in less than thirty minutes, and he

was to be one of the star witnesses. It would require rapid driving to reach the city hall at the designated hour. Tossing his napkin on the table, he rose, telling Carter they must hurry. Then both hastened to the machine standing in the drive.

The car represented one of Carter's most extravagant moods. The long, low roadster was considered by most people the best machine which has as yet been made. Yet it was not very beautiful. Long and low in design, with a shining dark blue body, it spoke more of the power under the hood than it did of beauty. As Carter threw open the door he said they would use his machine and not lose the time it would require to go to the garage for another.

It was just half past ten when they found a parking place near the public park. Only the fact that they saw a man backing away from the curb allowed them to lose no time in driving around, for the square was lined with parked cars, cars of every expensive make one could name. People were hurrying up the steps of the city hall.

Entering the building they discovered that the inquest was to be held in the courtroom on the top floor. The stairways were narrow, but it was of no use to endeavor to go up in the one elevator the building possessed. Before the narrow door of the shaft was a struggling, pushing mass of men and women. Even the stairway was jammed, and they found it difficult to reach the top floor. Here the confusion was even worse. To reach the closed door at the other end of the corridor seemed impossible.

Though he had attended several inquests, Manners noticed that never before had he seen such evident feeling as was shown by the people in the hall. They were not the usual type one observed at an inquest, curiosity seekers, men and women wishing to hear something sensational. These men and women were well dressed, people of culture and refinement. Sorrow could be seen upon many of the faces, and several elderly persons were wiping tears from their eyes.

The corridor was packed; it appeared doubtful that another person could find standing room. The blue coated policeman at the top of the stairway was shouting down its length, warning those who were struggling to push their way upward that there was no more room. How to get down to that closed door was a problem. Manners turned an inquiring glance on Carter, only to see an eyebrow rise and a little smile pass over the pink face. Yet they had to reach the courtroom.

Turning to the policeman, Manners told him he was to be a witness and asked his aid. Even after the officer had requested the crowd to let them through, they had a hard time in reaching the other end of the hall. After much pushing and shoving, stepping on people's toes and causing a general disturbance, they managed at last to stand before the door.

When Manners opened it, the policeman inside gave a vigorous protest, as he tried to close it in their faces, but at the remark that they were witnesses he stood aside and allowed them to enter. Standing close to the wall they saw that the room was crowded. It was a long

courtroom, oblong in form, and at the extreme end was a raised platform for the judge. Though every seat was filled no one was standing, nor were any more people being allowed in the room.

Sitting in the judge's seat was the coroner, talking with Rogan, and an individual whom Manners did not know. The chief had put on a new uniform, and the brass buttons glittered like gold. His face could not be seen, for he was bending close to the doctor's ear. As they looked, they saw him turn and with a glance sweep over the room. Evidently he was searching for someone, for the look went traveling over the long row of seats. When he finally saw Manners standing against the wall he motioned for him to come forward.

As they went down the aisle it was impressed upon them that the audience was unusually quiet. There was none of the usual excited whisperings, the nervous undertones of conversation which both had observed upon similar occasions. This crowd was serious, as though overwhelmed by the sorrow that had brought them out. It was Manners' idea that the men and the women he was walking past made up the bulk of the social and professional people of the city.

As they passed through the rail, behind which the lawyers sat when court was on, Rogan met them. Introducing Carter, Manners bent close to the chief's ear to whisper the words "Secret Service." Not a muscle of the chief's face moved, though his eyes took in the costly gray suit, as he observed the nonchalant gentleman whose hand clasped his. With an indication toward

two chairs standing beside the long table, he asked them to come to his office after the inquest, then turned away.

When at last the coroner slowly rose to stand silently behind the desk, he did not speak for a moment. First he looked gravely over the still room. He was wearing a dark suit and the careless attitude which he always wore had vanished. When he opened his lips, it was to pay tribute to the minister and state that he had, with every person in the city, felt sorrow at the loss they had sustained. This over, he picked up a sheet of paper.

He told them that under the law of their state a coroner had several methods of conducting an inquest. It was not necessary to hold a public hearing, if in his opinion it was not needed. In this case, because of the importance of the individual who had died, and the rather mysterious manner of his death, he had made the hearing public. Also, it was left to the coroner's discretion as to whether a jury should be called or not. He had decided to have a jury, and, from a paper in his hand, read off the names of twelve men.

As the men arose and filed their way to the jury box, Manners decided that the coroner and the chief were taking the affair very seriously. The twelve sober faced men who nervously seated themselves were numbered among the most prominent business and professional men of the city. It was no ordinary coroners' jury which was going to decide the circumstances of the minister's death. Instead, it was perhaps the finest jury Manners had even seen.

The first name called was Dr. William Remington. A silence enveloped the room as the stout little man went slowly to the witness stand. After being sworn in, he sank down in his seat, a decidedly nervous individual. The round face was twitching, and he never looked away from the coroner. Nervously the soft white hands kept opening and closing, as a flush swept across his cheeks.

The doctor's story was very brief, told in short, concise words. He had been asked, by an usher, to go directly to Dr. Wood's study. Church service had commenced, though the minister had not come upon the platform. The organ was playing, and it was his impression that the voluntary had been played at least twice. At the request to go to the study he had risen from his pew and gone through the door which was near the pulpit. In the study he had found Mr. Ranson and Professor Manners. Dr. Wood was lying on the floor, dead.

"At that time, when you examined him, you decided that the minister had died from a stroke?"

The question had been put very skillfully and it was Manners' impression that the coroner was going to do what he could to cover the doctor's diagnosis. The physician shifted his feet nervously as he looked down at his hands.

"I made a rather hasty examination," came the slow reply. "He was dead, and from what I saw then I decided he died from a stroke. Later I found that my first impression was not correct."

A little murmur passed over the crowded room.

There seemed no doubt no news had been allowed to leak out as to the real cause of the minister's death. But the fact that a coroner's hearing was being held had evidently aroused a great deal of suspicion. There must have been a great deal of gossip. As Manners looked down over the room and noticed the uneasy, flushed faces, he could tell that everyone was afraid of what might be disclosed.

There came the next question, the coroner wishing to know if Remington had ever examined the minister for life insurance. Nodding his head, the doctor went on to say that, only the day before the minister died, he had been in the office. The examination had been searching and when it was over he had congratulated the clergyman. Rarely had he found a man whose physical condition was so perfect.

"So, when you decided he had died from a stroke you were a little surprised?"

The doctor bowed, flushing a little as he replied. He had been much surprised, though he added that such cases were not unknown. But when the coroner pressed him, he admitted that the insurance examination had revealed nothing physically wrong with the clergyman.

"How about his mental attitude?"

"Joking all through the examination. He was in fine spirits. I remember he told me he was to start on his vacation Tuesday. Sunday was to be the last day the church was to be open until fall."

He left the chair to go back to his seat. The coroner

fumbled with some papers upon the desk, an excited whispering began to creep over the room. It was evident that the spectators were beginning to realize that something sensational was coming. Just what it might be it was evident they had not the slightest idea, but from the sober faces of both men and women they were evidently preparing themselves for a shock.

At the name of Henry Maxwell, a tall, well dressed man of around fifty went to the stand and took the oath. With one swift glance over the room, he turned in the direction of the coroner and waited for the first question. Who he was, Manners did not know for a moment; then, just as the coroner spoke, he remembered he was the toxicologist who had performed the autopsy.

He gave his name and told of his profession. He filled the position of toxicologist at the medical college, and, Manners judged, was an authority on his subject. He told of being asked by the police physician to perform an autopsy upon Dr. Wood. This had been done and when he said this, he leaned quietly back in the chair, waiting for the coroner to question him.

"You discovered the cause of death?"

"I did. He died from poison."

From the crowded courtroom there came the sudden, high, hysterical cry of a woman, followed by a silence in which every sound from the street could be heard. At the realization of what the toxicologist's words might mean, loud whispers began to be heard. In the back row a woman was crying in a wild hysterical man-

ner, trying vainly to check the sound. Up in the witness chair the professor sat without an expression on his calm face, waiting for the coroner to continue.

"What poison did you discover in the body?"

"Curare."

At the coroner's request, he went into details. As the hushed room bent forward to catch every word which fell from his lips, he told them that it was one of the rarest poisons known to science. In action it was swift and fatal, causing death within a very few moments after being introduced into the blood. Before death there would come a paralysis of the muscles which would make movement impossible. The minister would have been dead fifteen minutes after the poison entered the blood.

"Now, Dr. Maxwell," came the coroner's grave voice, "you say, 'after the poison entered the blood.' I understand then, that this poison is not fatal if taken internally. It must get into the blood stream to do any damage."

"Yes. Not only is it not fatal if taken internally, that is, drunk, but, what is more, it has no ill effects at all. It must come into direct communication with the blood stream, by a scratch or a wound. When it does, it acts almost at once."

Drake hesitated before venturing the next question. It was asked in a low voice, whose serious tone caused people to look nervously at the person seated next to them.

"Could the Rev. Mr. Wood have administered this poison to himself?"

"No," came a loud, protesting voice from the courtroom. The voice was shrill, trembling with protesting passion. Both Carter and Manners turned at the sound. In the front row, close to the rail, a man about forty-five was slowly sinking down in his seat. Across the smooth shaven face anger and embarrassment were playing, anger at what he had heard and embarrassment because the protesting words had escaped from his lips.

Manners did not recognize him. Someone of importance no doubt, for as people in the rear of the room rose to glance toward the rail, they all appeared to recognize the man. He had slumped far down in his seat and the face which looked at the floor was very red. After a darting look, Carter turned to raise one eyebrow in a humorous fashion. A little smile was playing over his lips as he bent forward to ask a question. He received no information, for Manners had never seen the individual before.

Checking the whispering voices by the comment that if there was any disturbance he would clear the room, Drake asked the next question. He wanted to know if the doctor thought the clergyman had committed suicide.

"I do not know," was the quick reply. "Of course it is natural to think he did, I know nothing of that phase of the affair. My business was to discover what poison had been used, not how it managed to get into his body. There was a scratch on his hand, and a slight one on his face. That is all I can say."

Ranson was the next witness. His testimony was brief and to the point. In a high, nervous voice he told

of seeing the minister come into the church fifteen minutes before the hour for services. Yes, he had spoken to him and he was in good humor and cheerful. He had followed his usual custom of going down to the basement on his way to the study. He had been out in the hall himself, and had seen no one go into the basement after the minister went down the steps. At Professor Manners' suggestion he had gone to the study to discover why the minister had not gone into the pulpit. He had found him lying upon the floor, dead.

As his friend left the stand Manners shook his head. The inquest so far, had been a useless thing. All that had been brought out was the fact that the man had died, by poison. By itself it was of little importance. True, there had been evidence that Wood was expecting to go away on his vacation, and that he had been in both good health and good spirits. These facts seem to make the theory of suicide impossible. But on the other hand, not the slightest bit of evidence had been produced to show that it had been murder. He doubted if the chief had been able to dig up anything touching on that theory.

The next witness, however, caused a horrible suspicion to enter the minds of the listeners. He was a tall, thin individual, slow speaking and not dressed in the best possible manner. The importance of his position seemed to weigh heavily upon him, and he also had a good deal of awe on his face when he took the oath, but the church janitor had real facts to give them.

It was the minister's custom to be in his study just before the service. As it was directly opposite the plat-

form, he would wait until the organist had half played through the first number, then come through the door to the pulpit. No one ever came in to see him before the service, as it was known that he wished to be alone the last few moments. He had not seen him come in Sunday morning nor had he been in the church when the body was discovered. He had unlocked the door at ten o'clock, then had gone home. Since it was summer, he was not needed at the church. He did, however, give them a few details about the study. One came up a flight of steps from the basement to a landing, from which three steps led to the study door. On the landing was a door which opened out on a lawn to the rear of the church. So far as he knew it was never used and, after he had heard of the minister's death, he had tried this door. It was locked with the key on the inside. It was his opinion that it had not been used. He had never known of Dr. Wood's using the rear door.

It seemed evident the chief was first trying to show that the clergyman had not died a natural death. This he had proved. The man had been poisoned. But it looked to Manners that Rogan had an impossible task before him if he expected to show murder. The janitor had told them that the rear door was locked; Ranson had testified that the minister had been alone in the study. And if no one had been in the room, then it could not have been murder, and was of course, suicide.

The back door had been locked. Then he gave a little start. All the janitor had said was that he had found the door locked. Again he saw the horrified faces of the men who were looking into the study. There had

been a good many of them. In the confusion and excitement, one would have had no difficulty in turning the key of the door. The janitor's evidence amounted to little. The door might have been locked every day for years and yet have been unlocked that morning. A glance showed a thoughtful line between Carter's eyes. Evidently he was thinking over the same problem. As he caught Manners' glance he bent close to his ear.

"Was the door locked?" he whispered.

Three more gentlemen went into the witness chair. Each was well dressed, the type of individual whose clothes and manner showed they had gained much from the world. But the sum total of what they knew was nothing. All testified that they had been sitting in the church waiting for the service to begin. No one had come through the study door and entered the auditorium. One admitted that he had made a mistake in the time and had, to his horror, arrived at the church twenty minutes before eleven. Seated in a pew, he had waited for the service to commence. He testified that no one had come out of the study.

A tearful old lady was the last witness, one whose white hair crowned a face swollen with weeping, who found it hard to give her testimony. Actually she had very little to say. The minister had roomed with her ever since he had come to the city. He had told her of his vacation plans. He was intending to spend a month fishing in the lakes in Canada. Just before he left the house Sunday morning he had said he would like to have her ride with him that afternoon. He was to make a call upon a sick family ten miles outside of the city.

To Manners' surprise this ended the inquest. For some reason—no doubt because he knew the testimony would add nothing to what had been said—the coroner did not call upon him to testify. As the woman left the stand and Drake picked up some papers which lay before him, Manners wondered if the inquest had been of any value. Nothing of importance had been proven, though he thought he knew why the chief had insisted that it must be held.

Wood had been the best loved figure in the city. His congregation, though not large, was, without a doubt, the most intellectual and important group in the community's life. That their minister would walk into his church study fifteen minutes before service and commit suicide they would never believe. Nor did he believe it himself. Though Rogan had been unable to produce any facts which would prove a crime had been committed, yet he had wanted the people to know all the circumstances. Rogan was looking into the future.

The few words with which Drake addressed his jury were very much to the point. He told them that every fact in the possession of the police had been given them. As single facts they might appear of little importance. Added all together, they seemed to make one thing very plain: Whatever had happened in the study in those fatal fifteen minutes before the service was to start, one thing had been established. The clergyman had expected to go on his vacation in a few days. There was no evidence of, nor any cause for suicide. Yet his death they must remember was either suicide or murder.

The word had at last been spoken. All through the inquest its shadow had hung like a heavy cloud over the room. Now it had come into the light of day. The most terrifying and sinister word which can be spoken, hinting of mysterious things, of horrifying details. As it was spoken, the faces of the men in the jury box grew very long, not only serious, but a little frightened.

After his short, concise statement, the coroner paused. He was not through, however. Becoming very serious, he informed the jury that they had a great responsibility. To decide the cause of the clergyman's death might appear to be a task far beyond their powers. All had known him. Most of them were members of his church. They must decide if they believed he was the type of individual who would take his own life, or else they must say he had been murdered. He gravely admitted that there was not the slightest bit of evidence to prove the last.

As the jury filed out, the hushed room was broken by a sound of the pushing back of benches, of people rising to their feet. Excited whispers and loud voices broke out on every side. People rushed together in little arguing groups. Manners could see the excited individual who had so loudly protested. With one hand wildly pounding the air, he was engaging all who would listen in an excited conversation.

Looking towards the judge's bench his eyes met Rogan's searching glance. A gesture came from the chief and a hand pointed downward. He wanted them to go to his office. That the jury would return in a

short time Manners doubted. Their task would not be easy, though he knew what the verdict might be. Rising, he motioned to Carter. A second later they were pushing their way through the crowded room, on their way to the office of the police chief.

CHAPTER IX

AFTER the excitement and loud conversation upon the other floors, the long hallway of the police station seemed very peaceful. With the exception of a desk man in one room, the floor appeared to be deserted. No one was in the chief's office, though the door was partly open. Once inside the room, Carter closed the door and threw an inquiring glance over the office. Its drabness and gloom did not impress him. Why was it that, though people depended upon the police for protection, they rarely gave the men proper office facilities?

Curiously he looked up at the windows. The room was actually below the street level, the sidewalk running close to the tops of the windows. Outside could be seen hurrying people, cars waiting for a traffic sign to flash green. It was depressing place, and he said as much to Manners. Then, opening his cigarette case, he sank down in the nearest chair.

"Harley, from what we have heard, I have come to the conclusion that the minister was murdered. What's more, it is going to turn out to be a very clever crime, one that will require all the experience and brains that red faced friend of yours has, to solve. But something hit me while I was sitting there."

The pleasant face grew a little animated, as the

drawl with which he usually spoke almost vanished. With an impulsive gesture he rose to his feet.

"I don't know what is back of that attempt to kill you, or that man you saw on the lawn last night, but it's my idea they are after something. Why not give them a good chance to get it?"

Manners protested that he had nothing in the house that anyone would want. What was more he knew no more about the reasons behind the attack made upon him than did Carter.

"I believe you," was the laughing reply, "but what I mean is this. There is a reason for the attempt to do you in—for that man being on your lawn at two in the morning. Suppose we set a trap. The odds are that they will come back. How well do you know the editor of your leading newspaper?"

Though Manners replied that he knew the editor well, yet he thought it was a foolish question. Just what might be behind it was uncertain. Carter was very apt to spring ideas upon his friends suddenly, make suggestions which required explanations to make them intelligible. With a motion of his hand, Carter enlightened him.

"Suppose that tonight, in a very conspicuous place in the paper, you read something like this: That Professor Harley Manners and his most distinguished friend, George Carter, left Westland at four o'clock for a three-day visit to New York. Put it in a place where it must be seen. Now what do you think may happen?"

"You think they may return to the house?"

Carter gravely bowed.

"Got it at once. What's more, we will take your car and vanish. But we will be back, watching, my child, watching."

His first thought was that Carter was more disturbed than he had been himself over what had happened. Yet deep down in his heart he knew that he had been worried. How glad he had been when Carter slipped through his door he hated to admit. Psychologically it was a good idea. It might work. If it did, there might be a chance to discover who the midnight intruder had been.

He was just about to say he agreed, when the door suddenly opened. Rushing into the room came Rogan, followed by a rather blasé young man the sight of whom rather gave Manners a shock. He had been talking about the editor of the leading paper, and behold him coming into the room with the chief. He was a calm, easy-going young man, whose bearing was in great contrast to that of the chief, for Rogan was excited and, after a motion to have the door closed, broke into speech.

"What do you think Green has just told me?" he started.

With a calm nod at Manners, the editor broke in on the excited flow of words.

"Better let me tell him, Rogan, though I cannot see why you are so excited about it. Wait till I get my cigar relighted."

Very slowly, far too slowly to suit the chief, the editor relighted what was left of his cigar. The per-

formance was deliberate, and he had to look at the short stump several times before he could make up his mind that it was going. With a shrug of his shoulders he allowed a thin line of smoke to trickle from his lips and looked around for a chair. As he was sitting down Carter was introduced.

"I simply told Rogan," he began, "that the minister's cashing in took a great load off my mind."

Astonished at the cool remark, Manners looked to see if the man was serious. As he did so he heard a chuckle from Carter. The editor was serious, though there was a little twinkle around his eyes as he calmly returned the look. Everything about him spoke of self-confidence, confidence mingled with a great deal of tolerance. Yet, Manners thought, it was a surprising statement. Why should the death of the clergyman relieve the editor's mind?

"You see," he grinned, "on Saturday, I had brought to me, to publish Monday, one of the most vicious attacks I have ever seen made upon a public man, a vicious, scathing attack upon the Reverend Mr. Wood."

"But you never would have published it," insisted the professor.

"Oh, yes, I would. The only thing which prevented its being in the morning paper was the fact that the minister had kicked in. You see, Prof., in my game, like all others, you have to do things you do not like to do. There are certain men whose advertising and influence is so great that you cannot escape doing what they want. This bird happened to be our leading advertiser."

"Tell him who it was," broke in Rogan.

The editor allowed his gaze to travel from Manners to the chief. It was a curious, calculating glance, weighing the eagerness of the chief's voice and studying the puzzled expression upon Manners' uneasy countenance. Apparently satisfied by what he saw, he gravely nodded.

"It was Hurd," he said.

At the long, low whistle which escaped from Manners' lips, the editor jumped to his feet. His voice was sarcastic as he spoke.

"Now what are you two keeping back from me?" he demanded. "What are you trying to hide, Rogan, keep back from the papers? What do you know?"

There came the chief's voice, conciliating and pleading. At the tone Green seated himself and dug into his pocket for a fresh cigar, but he was suspicious, and his eyes never left the chief's face.

"Now wait a minute, Jim," came the pleading voice. "I am keeping nothing back. It's my impression that both the minister and the women were murdered."

With a leap, Green was on his feet. He shot one searching glance at Rogan, as if he had not understood what he had heard. As if satisfied, he burst forth:

"My God, Rogan, are you trying to say that the woman who was found dead in the car was murdered? Not one hint of anything of the kind has crept out of your office. The papers have been told she died from a stroke. All the time you were keeping back on me the biggest story in years."

Bending down for the hat which he had tossed on the floor, he turned to go to the door. As he reached it Rogan's anxious voice caused him to whirl around. For a second he stood hesitating, then returned to his chair.

"Jim," apologized the chief, "that woman was poisoned. There is no evidence that she was murdered, not a single fact or clue of any kind to point that way, but I think she was. When we found that Wood was dead, poisoned, we had to have an inquest. He was too well known in the city to take a chance on just letting it go. But we kept back the real story of the woman's death because we had nothing to go on. That was all. I think she was murdered, just as I think the minister was."

"What sort of poison did she die of?"

"Curare," broke in Manners.

The editor gave an expressive shrug of his shoulders. For a moment he appeared to be digesting the new information. Once he slowly shook his head as if not agreeing with some thought which had come to his mind. Then he gave a sigh.

"Rogan," he said, "you can bet your life Wood was murdered. The Prof. here will tell you people of his sort never kill themselves. Do they, Manners?"

Manners assured him that the psychologists believed that no normal, balanced person ever committed suicide. One could be certain, when one read of an individual who had taken his own life, that the person was emotionally unbalanced at the time. Manners was very positive when he assured them that all the evi-

dence they had heard proved that the minister did not belong to the type of people who would commit suicide. Of that he was positive.

"That's my opinion," retorted the editor, "and I am going to quote the professor. And I have a hunch the woman never killed herself. But let me tell you about this article of Hurd's."

He paused to send forth a wreath of smoke rings, then continued:

"I have many people whom I do not like, but that bird, Hurd, narrow, sanctimonious hypocrite that he is, gives me the biggest pain of all. The article he sent in was so bitter and unjust that I refused to publish it. Then he came rushing to the office and in that thin toneless voice of his said I would publish it or all the advertising of his store would be yanked out of the paper. He, of course, is the biggest advertiser we have. I did hold out and insisted that if published it went in as a letter with his name signed."

"For God's sake, Green," broke in Rogan. "I don't like Hurd any more than you do, but what was in the article?"

"It was one of those things which call a man every name you can without swearing. Hurd went to Wood's church and left because the minister was both too intelligent and too liberal for him. And he couldn't run him." He grinned as he added: "I think he paid a dollar a year so he could come to their annual meetings and raise hell, good Christian that he is. This letter said that Wood's liberalism was leading the city to hell, quoted that the minister said there was no harm

in bathing beaches being opened Sunday and that sort of thing. It would have made a stir when it was published, for at that, Hurd has influence."

"Mr. Green," asked Manners, with a curious undertone in his voice, "did Hurd say anything about evil in that article?"

The editor's face became thoughtful. Then he laughed.

"He sure did. Said something about evil. He even hinted that Wood spent too much time seeing women in his study. I cut that out, of course. But as I remember he said something about Wood being a blanket, or something of the kind, of evil."

"A shadow of evil," suggested Manners.

"He used the expression somewhere in the letter. I will bring it over here and let you see it. But—"

There was the sound of hurrying feet in the hall. A hand came banging against the door and the knock was loud and insisting. Rogan's voice called out as the door was flung open. Into the room rushed the man who had spoken out in the courtroom, a man who, because of his excitement, found it difficult to speak. Silently they watched him until his tongue found words.

"Chief," came the shrill voice, "I just came from the courtroom. They brought in a verdict. Hedged all round it. Said Dr. Wood died from poison and they did not think he took it by his own hands. Did not have the nerve to say he was murdered."

As the man paused for breath, Manners observed the smile which swept over Carter's face. He hardly

blamed the jury for not wishing to say it was murder. After all there was no evidence actually to support the viewpoint. But they might just as well have brought in that verdict. The one the man had reported said that, though not in direct words. As he thought this, the high, thin voice shrilled out:

"Chief, he must have been murdered. I want to offer a reward of a thousand dollars to anyone who brings in the evidence which will enable us to catch the murderer. Will you accept the offer?"

The chief got the excited man out of the office after awhile. He assured him the police would be pleased to have a reward offered. Then, after going to the door, as the man still insisted on talking, Rogan went out with him to the hallway. They could hear the two voices, one shrill and excited, the other heavy and calm. With a laugh Green turned to the two men.

"Tommy Freeman is an excitable cuss," he observed. He went on to give them some information. The excited figure which had rushed into the room was one of the wealthy men of the city. In a sense he was a newcomer, having been there only five years, a broker, who had made a good deal of money since he came to the city. To Manners' surprise, he heard that the man had bought rather close to his own home.

The chief showed no evidence of returning. With a yawn the editor rose to his feet, saying he must run back to the paper. There was work before him. Every reporter he had would be sent forth to search out the story of the woman's life. Until Rogan was willing to speak he could not hint at murder, but he grinned

when he remarked that the fact that she was poisoned would say all that was needed.

As he said good-by and started for the door, Manners remembered Carter's idea. Calling to the editor he asked him if he would see that the evening edition had, in a place where all could observe it, an item. When he told what he wished in the paper, Green laughed. Then he nodded, starting for the door again. But before he went through, he turned.

"All I ask, Professor," he said, "is that when your story breaks, whatever it is, you call me up. Your item will be in; we will tell the world that for three days you will be in New York."

The door closed behind him, only to reopen the next second. Rogan had managed to get away from his visitor and had returned to the office. Standing by the desk, he searched for a stogie and, finding none, reached down and pulled out a drawer. From a box, a dozen of the long brown smokes went into a vest pocket. One was lighted before he spoke. Then, with a glance back to see if he had really closed the door, he turned.

"What do you think of what Jim Green told you?" he inquired.

"I have an idea, Rogan," came Manners' slow voice, "that when you see the article which was sent to the paper you will discover it was written on the same typewriter as those letters which bothered you. What's more, I think Hurd's the man who did it."

Grunting out the retort that it was a good thing he had been worried by the letters, Rogan lapsed into silence. He was not an imaginative man; his mind

worked slowly at best. What the editor had said and now Manners' remark made him a little uneasy. Hurd might not be a very pleasant individual to know, but the man did have money and influence. Even to allow the thought that was in his mind was absurd, but in the end he was forced to put it into words.

"Do you think, Harley," came the grave question, "that he could be mixed up in the minister's death?"

Manners did not think so and expressed himself at length. Hurd was one of those repressed, bigoted individuals of which every city has a few examples. Without tolerance and always malicious, the man might, and in fact would, try to injure those he hated. But when he used the word "injure" he did not mean physical injury. Hurd took out his anger by writing. There was little chance that he would ever resort to violence. If, by writing unsigned letters, or by using his influence, he could harm the minister, he would do so; but he would not kill him.

Rogan listened carefully enough, feeling a little reassured by what he had heard. As he thought of the task ahead of him he was not happy. Two murders had been committed and the entire city would expect the police to bring the guilty person to justice, and there was not the slightest sort of a clue upon which to work. Not only would the city expect that he find the criminal, but he knew that the continuance of his position depended upon his success.

Thoughtfully he studied the two men sitting before him. Manners was his friend, teacher of a subject about which the chief would have admitted that he

knew little. The other man he knew nothing about. He must have plenty of money, for his general appearance showed that he was not over familiar with work. A rather foppish young man, he thought, dressed just a little bit too carefully. Manners had whispered that he belonged to the Secret Service. Though Rogan rather doubted this, yet it might be so. He was going to need all the help he could receive, and perhaps they might be able to aid him.

"I wish," he began, "that you would take an interest in this case. I never saw one like it, in all the years I have been on the force. Manners was in at the beginning, and God knows I am going to need all the aid I can get."

As his voice died away, Carter cast a look at the platinum wrist watch he wore, then with an exclamation jumped to his feet, but when he spoke it was not to mention the time.

"All right, Chief, count us in. Now I have a feeling I would like to have a look at that church study where you found the minister."

Because of the crowd of curiosity seekers who had stormed the church, the chief had been forced to place a policeman before the building. His orders were to allow no one to enter, but when the officer had glanced at the note which Rogan had given Manners and Carter, he unlocked the door. The chief, because of an engagement with the coroner, had refused to leave the station.

The entrance to the church was very close to the extreme edge of the building. Along one side ran a narrow walk, with a high fence separating it from the next

property. Looking down the walk, Manners observed that it led to the back of the church. Beyond the building he could see the green grass and rather small, unkempt shrubbery. Starting along the side of the church, he called to Carter to follow.

There was nothing worth the seeing in the rear of the building. The lot ran back to a fence, beyond which was a garage. On each side were the back yards of dwelling houses, and the fences which separated the lots could easily be climbed. Someone had once started a flower garden close to the rear wall of the building, but the weeds had long since conquered. One thing which did interest Manners, for it was the object which had caused him to come to the rear of the church, was the door, which, if he put out his hand, he could touch.

This was the door which the janitor had testified was never used. Yet, if someone had been in the clergyman's study, he had to leave by the door. Ranson was positive no one had come out of the basement. Others had testified that no one had passed out of the study into the church auditorium. There was left only this door, and the janitor had sworn that it was locked. This was of little importance. There had been plenty of opportunity during the confusion subsequent to the discovery of the minister's body to lock the door.

Bending down, his hand went out to try the knob, then in mid-air the motion was arrested. With a sudden cry he called to Carter, pointing with his finger. Across the keyhole and running over the knob itself were the fine spun lines of a spider web, one which, from its size, and the dead and withered flies in its

center, showed it had been there for many days. No one had been through that door recently.

The look on his face caused Carter to laugh. The janitor's conclusion that no one had used the door had been proved. The spider's web had been there many days; how long one could not determine. There was no doubt, however, that no one had passed through that door in the last week or so. That was evident.

To the right of the door, just a little way above the ground, were three windows. When he bent to look through them, he discovered that he was looking in at a small kitchen. A long gas stove, flanked by a sink, lay directly below the windows. It would have been possible to enter the church through the windows, but then, one after another, he discovered that they were all locked,

Going to the front of the church, the policeman opened the door. Manners led his friend down through the basement and up the short flight of steps to the study. The door was open and, after entering the room, he decided that it had not been disturbed. Even the hymn book was still open, and upon the pages lay the manuscript of what he judged was to have been the morning service. The one window was placed so high in the wall that, even with his hand above his head, he was unable to reach the lower sill.

They did not speak for a while, both studying the room. Here had been passed the hours of a man who loved books. They lined three sides of the room and the tops of the bookcases were piled high. A filing case was in one corner, flanked by a stand upon whose sur-

face stood a typewriter. Besides the chair behind the desk were three others in various positions in the room. A dictaphone stood under the window.

The desk interested Manners. It was a flat topped affair, rather above the average size. The surface was unusually clear, the hymn book being the only volume there. Several typewritten sheets of papers were in one corner and also the telephone. Nothing about the desk was unusual, yet it interested him.

Before he died, the minister had been sitting in that chair. No doubt he had given a glance at his order of service, seen that he had everything he must carry into the pulpit. He would rise during those fifteen minutes. Had he risen before he was poisoned or afterwards? Not that this made any difference, but he wondered. The body had been discovered on the other side of the desk, lying on the floor, with one groping hand upon the side of the desk.

Carter listened while Manners told what was in his mind. To him, one thing was apparent. Manners had been interested in crime for years, but from the standpoint of a psychologist, more concerned with the type of people who committed crime, and why they did it, than anything else. Carter's career was spent among those who did wrong. He was able to see from long experience what Manners perhaps did not notice.

He not only believed it was murder, but he was convinced that the crime was one of the most skillful he had been in contact with. If Rogan had not played out his hunch, there would never have been any suspicion of murder. It was no ordinary crime of passion they

faced, nor one of revenge, but a murder, very skillfully planned. How it had been carried out was the first problem.

At the inquest, the evidence had shown that no one had entered the study after the minister went in himself. Could there have been anyone in the room when he went in? No, that seemed impossible. The murderer had to leave the study, and there was no way to vanish without being seen. No one had gone through the back door or come out of the basement. There was no place to hide.

From his long experience, and what police experts had told him, Carter knew that most murderers were below the average in intelligence. Once in a great while, a keen, shrewd individual would commit murder. One had in this case, and planned it so well that if it had not been for a superstitious police chief it would have passed unnoticed, committed it in such a manner that apparently they were unable to find out how it had been done.

When they left the church, it was to go to a nearby hotel for lunch. Though every inch of the study had been examined nothing had been discovered. In a sense their time had been wasted. When Carter remarked this, Manners was not so sure. Something about the study had whispered a warning of caution. Just what it was he did not know, but something in the room had tried to start an association of ideas in his mind. For the time being it was not successful, but sooner or later he would know what the subconscious thought was.

It was after five when they left the house. In order to have no one there, Manners had told his colored housekeeper she could spend the night with her mother. The woman had left at four. It was after five when the taxi came from the city. Carter had insisted upon a taxi, saying that it would save their going back for their car. The dog had been a problem, which was solved by taking him with them. What they would do later in the evening Manners did not know.

The driver was told to take them to the station, where he was paid and dismissed. Walking through the long waiting room, they went out of the other entrance and climbed into another taxi. This time the taxi was to drop them at the Westland Club. Carter had protested at the club, but Manners had laughed away his objections. He was by far the youngest member, keeping his membership in memory of his father, who had founded the society. There would be no one there but men over sixty years of age.

There was nothing gaudy or exciting about the Westland Club. When the dog had been given to the hall boy, and they entered the quiet portals, Carter decided that it would make a good funeral home. There was an uncanny silence hanging over the large rooms, which caused his voice to drop to a whisper as he leaned over to make an irreverent remark. Long heavy curtains hung over the windows. Though it was only six o'clock the electric lights were on. With the exception of three elderly men the place seemed deserted.

The library, which they entered, was the gloomiest room Carter had ever been in. Sinking down in a big

chair he stared at the high bookcases which hid the walls. Behind glass doors were row after row of books, bound in a dismal black. Not a sound came into the room, the silence was appalling. He could well see why Manners had said no one would ever know they were at the Westland Club.

It was nine o'clock when they left the building to go down a side street which led to the lake. Long, low buildings lined each side of the street, most of them painted a reddish color, buildings sadly in need of repairs. Street lights were few and those that were lighted failed to dispel the gloom. Around the buildings were great shadows, soon to be pits of darkness which the eye could not pierce. The street sloped downward and at the end they could see the great black shadow which was the lake.

They came out at the water front. Carter followed Manners into a large boathouse. They had been expected, for after giving their names and telling the boy who had come from a back room where he could find the boat in the morning, they went out on a landing stage. Tied to a rail was a long, narrow speed boat. While the boy unfastened the ropes they climbed in, Manners taking the wheel.

As the engine roared into action, Carter glanced around. To the right, not three hundred yards away, the public dock ran far out into the lake. Its sides were gleaming with lights and hundreds of people, brought out by the warm night, were walking up and down its length. Behind him the streets stretched away from the water and at the top of the long hill were the bright

windows of a hospital. Overhead the sky was filled with stars.

As they headed out into the harbor they saw the flash of the lighthouse on the breakwater. Turning in its direction the boat began to pick up speed. From the sound of the motor, there was plenty of power in the engine. The lake was calm. Under their rushing prow the water was thrown aside in a torrent of spray. Leaning back in his seat, Carter found a cigarette and when it was lighted, started to sing. The tune was not much, but Manners chuckled at the words, words of a weird old French ballad, written in a day when frankness of speech was possible.

They had to run through the long, narrow entrance of the harbor, and the speed was slackened as they began to pass between the high concrete walls. Once through, they were on the lake itself. Tonight the water was like a mirror, without even the slightest swell or the faintest breath of air. Heading in the direction of Canada, the power was turned on to the full, and the engine settled down to its work.

It was not until they were several miles from the shore that Manners turned to follow the shore line. They were unable to see the line, but the headlights of the automobiles on the peninsula road formed a steady stream of light. Far ahead was a boat, the sound of its motor drifting down to their ears. Along the shore the lights of the cottages broke the darkness.

They landed almost a mile from Manners' house, at a spot where a fisherman had a little boathouse. Tell-

ing him to watch the boat until it was called for, Manners slipped a coin into his hand and they started off down the beach, the dog at their heels. The presence of the big Airedale had bothered Carter; he was not certain that Manners had been correct when he said the dog would obey every command and make no sound. But there had been nothing else to do but to bring the animal along.

The shore was covered with small pebbles and the darkness made walking difficult. The bank rose above the beach and the lawns of the summer cottages were above their heads. Though there were stars in the sky, yet upon the shore it was dark. Down by the water's edge it appeared to be lighter, but, not wishing to be seen, they walked close to the edge of the bank.

It was a silent walk, neither one feeling like speaking. The only sound was the crunching of the stones under their feet, the noise of a motor boat far out on the lake. Past house after house they walked, seeing no one. The dog seemed to realize that something was wrong, for he kept his big body close against his master's side. Ahead of them the beach lost itself in the blackness—a darkness which appeared to vanish into space.

As they stumbled against a granite sea wall, Manners whispered to Carter. He had reached his own place and there was no high bank to shut off the sight of the lawn. They could make out the trees, glimpse the dim shadow of the house. As they gazed over the lawn it lost its shape and size. Instead of being a place which

they knew, it had become a mysterious place filled with dark shadows. Even the trees had assumed odd shapes, and their tops were lost against the sky.

As Manners' hand went reaching forth to fall upon Carter's shoulder, he felt the dog press close against his legs. Something sinister and evil had crept into the night. As he looked over the dark lawn he could almost feel the silence, an uncanny silence, which pressed around him like a thick blanket. Though he tried to keep it back a shiver of dread ran suddenly through his body.

CHAPTER X

At the club a hiding place had been discussed. In Manners' boyhood the lawn had been an orchard. Though most of the fruit trees had vanished, two old, half decayed apple trees remained. A sentimental reason had kept them from being cut down. As a boy Manners had spent many long hours on the platform his father had built for him in the branches. Every year the platform was repaired.

One of the trees stood at the extreme end of the lawn. Because the elms prevented a clear view of the house, this tree was of no value, but the other was only a short distance from the garage. From its platform, one could not only see the house but at the same time take in most of the lawn. It was upon this platform they decided to hide.

The lawn stretched before them, a place of contrasted shadows. As their eyes became accustomed to the darkness, objects began to assume their proper shapes. The gardens could be glimpsed, also the garage. Beyond the driveway was the house, a dim, dark shadow, which cut off all sight of the road. And it was still, without a sound of any kind to break the silence.

There was no evidence of anyone being on the lawn. With a whispered command to the dog, Manners pulled himself over the sea wall, Carter following. Keeping in the shadows they went from tree to tree,

until they stood at the rear of the garage. Here they waited for a moment, then darted over to the apple tree. Above their heads could be seen the dim outline of the platform.

What to do with the dog was the problem. In the end they managed to lift him into the fork of the tree. Climbing after him, Manners half lifted, half pushed the animal to the platform. As Carter came scrambling after them, the dog gave a deep sigh as if expressing his idea of the whole proceeding. Then, after examining the floor, he dropped down contentedly at his master's feet.

Though the platform was not very large, there was room enough for the three of them. In the direction of the house their vision was clear; nothing stood in the way to break the view. Back of them, in the direction of the water, were no trees, but if they looked to their left, the lawn became a place of shadows. Gardens and trees broke the view and they were unable to see the lake. There was little chance of their being seen, for the low branches protected them on every side.

It was Manners' belief that they were due for a long wait. As he settled down on the platform, he wondered if what they were doing was not absurd. When Carter had first mentioned his idea it had seemed very plausible. Now, as he sat in the darkness, it began to look very silly. They were setting a trap, but that anyone would fall into it he doubted.

They did not speak even to whisper. So calm was the night that the faint murmur of the water lapping upon the shore could be heard. Once in a while a car

passed by on the road. Traffic, however, was slight, and there were long intervals of time between the machines. At their feet, a dark shadow upon the platform, lay the dog and from his heavy breathing they knew he was asleep.

With his back against the post, Carter was thinking. The crime he had stumbled upon intrigued him. Far better than Manners he realized that it was no ordinary murder. Clergymen bore a charmed life when it came to being victims of violence. True, he knew of several cases where they had been murdered, but those had been affairs in which an insane parishioner had committed the crime. No unbalanced mind was behind this case. The minister's death had been well thought out, skillfully executed. So had the woman's. Only the fact that the chief had been worried had caused the discovery that the deaths had not been natural.

But the poison bothered him, curare, the favorite poison in mystery stories. He had read many a yarn where the criminal had used the South American toxin, but he had never known of a case where it had been used. Searching his mind he brought to light what he knew about the drug. The Indians used the juice of some plant, smeared their arrows and spears with it. He had seen some in a museum, some sort of a reddish brown paste. Physicians once in a while used the poison in the form of a yellow powder, though not frequently; it was not easy to procure.

He thought of other poisons; of the mysterious weapons of the Borgias, now presumed to be some sort of an arsenic preparation, remembered reading

that during the middle ages deaths from poisoning were commonplace. But those were cases of slow poisoning, wherein people grew weaker from day to day until taken by death. Curare acted like "the wrath of God," swiftly and certainly, but unless it came into the blood it was harmless.

Under what head would this crime fall? People committed murder for revenge, to gain money, or because of sexual passion. He doubted if the minister's death could be laid to any of these reasons. This had been a crime of cold-blooded deliberateness, well thought out, committed by someone with a keen mind. And no woman had committed it.

Poisoning, of course, was a woman's crime, the classic method by which they killed, but no woman had killed the clergyman. Only in poisoning cases did medico-legal history show that women ever used much premeditation in committing murder. The minister's death had been from poison, and it was a premeditated crime. He felt very certain, however, that no woman had been concerned.

His hand went searching for a cigarette, only to realize that he could not smoke. Could there be any connection between the two deaths? The poison had been the same, but Manners had described her as a type one would not expect the clergyman to know. He was not so sure; ministers came into contact with all sorts of people. There must be a connection between the two deaths. The motive in the two deaths would be the same.

He gave up thinking to study the lawn. The night

was warm and a slight breeze had started to blow from the lake. The leaves above their heads were gently stirring; the murmur of the water against the shore was a bit louder. His eyes had become accustomed to the darkness and, though all below him was a mass of mingled shadows, he was able to pick out various objects. Only beyond the house was the darkness so dense that he could not pierce it. There, a high hedge hid everything from sight.

Manners made no effort to think. Utterly relaxed, he sat close to the edge of the platform. By reaching out his hand he could have touched Carter and for a second wondered of what his friend might be thinking. Against his leg was the warm body of the dog, whose heavy breathing told him he was asleep. If it had not been for the vague, uneasy feeling that they were acting rather foolishly, he would have enjoyed the silence. But this he could not forget.

How long he sat before he gave a glance at his wrist watch he did not know. When he looked at the radium dial the indistinct glow showed him that it was twelve o'clock. He raised his eyes just in time to see the headlights of a machine go sweeping by on the road. Idly he watched it vanish around a curve then picked it up again by the tail light. He saw it turn and go down a driveway some distance away. Deciding that Hurd was going home, he watched the moving light until the trees hid it from sight, then gave up thinking about his neighbor.

He felt Carter shift his weight as a sigh fell from the unseen lips. He was growing weary. Time and

space had become mingled now, and the minutes seemed endless. His eyes were so strained from gazing down into the silent yard that he turned his gaze away and looked towards the stars and soon this study became so intent that he gave a start as he felt Carter's hand go clasping over his arm. His ear was brushed by his friend's lips. There came a low, eager whisper:

"Down on the shore, Harley, a boat. Can't see anything, but heard a sound. No doubt something there."

He felt, rather than heard Carter scrambling to his feet. At the movement the dog stirred, but at a word from his master sank back again on the floor of the platform. Pulling himself upright, he stood with his body pressed against the trunk of the tree to stare down at the lake. Beyond him could be made out the lake, an indistinct object beyond the trees. Directly in front were several gardens, and the trees were thicker than they were at any other place on the lawn. He could see nothing, but he could hear something.

It was a faint sound which had drifted through the darkness, but he knew the cause. The shore in front of his sea wall was composed of small pebbles, and there was no mistaking the sound. A boat was being dragged from the water. Eagerly he turned to whisper, but Carter spoke first.

"Harley, that means more than one person. We'd better stay here until we know what's going on. Keep your dog still."

Assuring him that the animal would obey, Manners put his hand into a pocket. The cool touch of an automatic caused a little shiver to pass over him. His eyes

searched the darkness, but only deep pools of blackness could be seen, and the round dark circles of the flower gardens. To catch a glimpse of the shore was impossible.

With every nerve in his body tense, he listened for the sound to be repeated. For a moment nothing was heard. Then came a muffled voice, followed by a slight crash, someone had slipped on the stones. Pressed against the tree trunk, Manners waited until there was a low threatening growl from the dog. Dropping down on his knees he commanded the animal to be silent. Though the situation was unusual, yet so well trained was the animal that Manners knew that he would obey. As he started to rise to his feet, Carter's hand gripped his shoulder.

"Look over at the garden where you saw a man last night."

Early in the morning he had ordered the shrubbery at the rear of the garden to be removed. As he looked he decided he had been very wise. He could see the flower garden, a darker outline than the lawn, but it was not the garden which held his glance. It was what was coming over the lawn—two indistinct figures were emerging from the shadows of the trees.

Two vague figures they were, about ten feet apart, coming slowly. As he looked, Manners thought it was the most sinister spectacle he had ever seen. Though they were but dim outlines, he could glimpse the suggestive attitude of the arm which was nearest the platform, knew it was gripping a gun and a gun which would be used. To reassure himself he slipped his hand

into his pocket, to touch for a second the revolver which was there.

The house was almost a hundred feet away, with the garden at its extreme end. Beyond the house the lawn sloped away to a high hedge. Because of the hedge which ran along the side of the road, a passing motorist could not see the house. Directly in a line from the the approaching men were stairs leading to the veranda. Fifty feet would bring them to the bottom step.

As they passed by the little garden, they came together for a moment. A short conversation was taking place. One individual seemed to be doing all the talking, a shorter figure than the other. They saw his arm go up, watched the gesture which pointed to the house. Then the men broke apart. One started on a half run for the house; the other went to the end of the house then turned toward the steps.

The man running towards the veranda reached the steps then paused for his companion. They heard a muffled voice, then he turned and darted up the steps. The other man stood silent a moment. They saw his glance go sweeping up the driveway until it seemed to rest upon the tree they were in. As he crushed against the trunk, Manners wondered if they had been observed. The fear passed as the individual looked the other way and then went up the steps to join his companion.

Just what they should do Manners did not know. The dog was looking towards the house and as his hand fell upon the soft body it trembled. A gentle pressure

of his hand, a pat on the head and a whispered word calmed the animal. Manners knew the dog could not be any more disturbed than he was himself.

He started a whispered question, only to have Carter cut him short. A slight sound came drifting from the veranda, the scraping noise a window makes when it is being raised. Then came a moment's silence, broken by a car going by on the road. Carter bent close to whisper in his ear:

"There is at least one man in the house and though the other may be on the veranda watching, yet he may have also gone in. I have an idea. We will get out of the tree. I want to have a look at that boat. There will be time enough to go to the shore. But watch that fool dog of yours."

It was the dog which made Carter insist that Manners should be the first to leave the platform. Reaching the grass he stood with half lifted arms while the big Airedale was dropped from the tree. When the dog stood on the grass Manners took a stout cord from a pocket and tied it through the animal's collar. Before the task was over, Carter was by his side.

There was a chance that they might be observed when they left the shadow of the tree, but, after darting to the rear of the garage, they decided they had not been observed. The garage was close to the hedge which separated Manners' land from Hurd's. A vegetable garden ran down to the sea wall and along its side was a row of currant bushes. Walking between the bushes and hedge they had little fear of being seen. As they

dropped off the sea wall onto the beach, they knew the wall would hide them from the sight of anyone on the lawn.

It was brighter on the shore than it had been on the lawn, but the difference was slight, for the sky had begun to be filled with drifting clouds. Going close to the water's edge they followed the shore for a few feet. Then the dark outline of a boat loomed before them. When they stood beside it they saw that it was a small row boat.

It was Carter who climbed into the boat. Manners could see that he was searching it, but doubted if he would find anything. He watched him go to the back seat, and saw the sudden splutter of a cigar lighter. The flame lasted but a second and was shielded by Carter's hands, but he was surprised to see him bend far over the end of the boat and examine the stern. When Carter came out of the boat, he stood for a moment looking out over the water. Then he came to Manners' side.

"We'd better go up over the lawn and wait beside the steps; they will be coming out soon—and keep hold of that dog."

Scrambling to the top of the sea wall they went creeping over the grass. Behind each tree trunk they would halt, studying the lawn. Once, as he glanced at the house, Manners thought that for a moment he had seen a light in the upper floor, but if he had, it vanished in the same second he saw the flash. The driveway was deserted, and, look as they would, no lurking figures could be seen.

They had reached the last of the trees, and their shelter was gone. The hundred feet head was the danger point. At the driveway the close cropped grass ended, and there came a few feet of gravel. They could see the wide steps which led to the veranda, but the house itself was a pool of gloom. Not a sound crept through the night air, nor could they see any signs of life in the house.

Standing behind the tree trunk they hesitated for a moment. The scene before them was peaceful enough, but they knew it held a sinister threat. There were two men in the house. When they started over the grass they might be seen from a window, but the risk must be taken, for there was not time to go back to the sea wall and reach the house from a safer direction.

Manners felt Carter's hand touch his arm, and the next second his friend had left the shelter of the tree to go running across the grass. Holding the cord in his hand he whispered to the dog and started to follow. Over the grass he ran, and walked when he reached the gravel of the driveway. Then came a slight strip of grass and he was behind the row of rose bushes which ran in front of the house.

A little out of breath he crouched down upon the cool grass. Against his back was the post of the veranda, at his side the steps. Carter was nowhere in sight, but he judged he was on the other side of the railing. It was a safe hiding place, for the rose bushes protected him in front, while the side of the house hid him from anyone on the veranda. For the first time in a long while he felt secure.

He tried to figure out what the men were after. So far as he knew the house contained nothing of value. True, upon the shelves in the living room were books worth a good deal of money, but no one broke into a house to steal books. The silver was worth something, but was not especially valuable. Money he always kept on his person, and there was nothing else to draw an intruder. But they were after something.

From above his head floated a sound. As he heard it, he straightened up, only to press against the house. On the veranda, from the direction of the big bow window, he heard a foot come softly down upon the boards. In a second came another, as the second man came climbing through the window. They were moving cautiously, though making little effort to be still. He heard them walk several feet; then they paused.

Slipping his hand into the coat pocket, he gripped the revolver. Then he listened. Above his head an argument was going on. He could not hear the words but the tone was expressive. One of men was protesting, and protesting rather vigorously. He could hear the rough undertones, followed by a snarl of contempt. Then came the sound of footsteps, not coming to the steps which led down to the lawn, but going down to the end of the veranda.

Carter, he knew, expected the men would use the steps. When they reached the bottom they would leap out at them. Taken by surprise, the struggle should be brief, over in a second. But this plan was spoiled. Instead of coming down the steps they were going to the end of the veranda. There was but one place where

they could drop over the railing, for at the other end of the piazza was a glass enclosed sun-room.

If they intended to surprise them there was little time to lose. As he thought this, he heard Carter start to run. Brushing through the bushes, the leash held firmly in his hand, he followed. As his feet went crunching upon the driveway he saw Carter ahead of him, running with his head down. In a burst of speed he commenced to run, the dog leaping by his side. The two men on the veranda had suddenly whirled about to cast one fleeting look at the drive. Alarmed by what they saw, they burst into a run. Manners saw that they could not reach the end of the porch before the men dropped to the grass. He came around the side of the house in time to see one man, with Carter at his heels, running towards the hedge. The other was just dropping to the grass.

With a command to stop he brought the gun out of his pocket. As he did so, he knew he could not shoot, but he would fire in the air. The command to halt brought no response. With a backward look the men continued to run across the lawn. Pointing upwards, Manners fired twice; then he thought of the eager dog tugging at the leash.

With the words, "Get him, Satan," he dropped the cord. The animal gave a muffled whine and started at terrific speed down the sloping lawn. Ahead could be seen the man, twisting and darting among the trees. In great leaping bounds the dog was running him down. As the dog followed them Manners saw the man suddenly whirl around, noticed his hand go sweeping out

as the dog sprang; then both went falling to the ground.

As he ran to their side it dawned upon him that the Airedale had not barked once. When he reached them the man was huddled on the ground; beside him, with his big paws on his chest, crouched the dog, whose eyes never left the man's face, and from whose throat issued growls so menacing and threatening that the man appeared afraid to move.

Dropping to his knees Manners searched through the man's pockets but found no gun. Calling the animal away, he pressed his revolver against the man's side, telling him to rise. As he started his captive toward the house, he wondered what had happened to Carter. The last he had seen of him he had been running across the grass. He had heard no gun; the only shots fired had been his own.

Approaching the house, he met Carter coming around the side of the house. Over his arm was a dark object, which apparently was a suit of clothes. As they came together he was told to open the door and turn on the lights, Carter would bring in his prisoner. The key was in his pocket and it took only a second to enter the house and turn on the lights. By the time he was in the living room, Carter and the prisoner were by his side.

The man he turned to face might have been twenty years of age; then again he could have been older, a thin, shriveled up individual with an evil, vicious face, upon which dissipation had etched deep lines. As he looked at him Manners remembered a Chicago police chief who had told him that an examination of a hun-

dred gangsters of that city had shown their mental age was around twelve. This man looked like the typical gangster. The little darting eyes swept over the two men, but the dog seemed to cause him the greatest anxiety. As his gaze rested upon the animal, observed his huge size, an astonished expression swept over the evil face. It vanished in a second to give place to an angry sneer. There came a sullen look as Carter's voice drawled out:

"You certainly did plan a pleasant surprise for us tonight. Tell us what it was all about."

"No," was the snarling retort.

For a moment Carter studied the defiant face. Without a doubt he was a gangster, and, though they had a certain kind of courage, yet they had no brains. Placed in an unexpected situation, they never knew how to react. It would take a lot to make this fellow talk, and give his companion away he would not do, that is, unless he had to face something outside of his comprehension. As Carter thought this his eyes dropped down to the dog, who was standing only a few feet away from the gangster and whose body trembled with rage as his eyes never left the defiant figure. Then came Carter's voice, icy:

"I don't know that I care about your talking. That is up to you. But this Airedale here, he just loves to play with birds of your sort. I have a good mind to turn him loose on you and see—"

The man gave a quick, startled look at the dog. As their eyes met the Airedale drew back his upper lip in a snarl and the long white fangs were revealed. With

a quick, backward start the man broke into speech.

"What do you want to know?" was the unwilling question.

"What did you want here?" Carter queried.

"Those rags." He pointed to the chair upon which Carter had tossed the objects he had been carrying as he came around the side of the veranda. To Manners' surprise it was the suit of clothes he had worn the night of the chief's call. Because they had been ruined beyond repair, he had thrown them into a closet. That the man was telling the truth he doubted. No one would have broken into the house for that worthless gray suit.

"You know a good tailor," was Carter's dry comment, "but why did you want the suit of clothes?"

The figure hesitated a moment, only to growl out that he did not know. Then, as Carter started to reach out his hand toward the dog, the man found his tongue.

"Get me, my pal and me were asked to bust in here and find that suit and bring it along. The bird who fixed it all up wanted it. Don't know why, an' youse can believe me or not. I don't know the guy, he said youse were all away."

"That all sounds very nice, but where were you to meet him after you came out of the house?"

The man shook his head. He insisted that he did not know. His pal did, but had not said anything to him. Manners noticed that Carter did not ask him to give the name of his companion or press him upon that point. If the man had told the truth he had been invited to take part in a robbery. As to the reason or the

details, he knew nothing. He insisted, however, that the suit was the only thing they were after. Incredible as the fact sounded, something about the sullen face caused Manners to believe this was so.

It was an hour before the police arrived and took the man away. Though they tried again and again to get him to admit that he knew the reason why the suit was wanted, they always met the same retort. He knew nothing about it. He did not know the man who had put up the job, had not seen him before that evening. Why he wanted the suit he did not know. In the end when the police took him to the station they had to be content with that. When the door closed and they were alone, Carter threw a quizzical look at Manners and laughed.

"Harley, if you expect to have your house broken into, I hope you won't run a wire around your garden again. I almost broke my neck. Forgetting that, has the house gone dry?"

Taking the hint, Manners went out to the kitchen, returning shortly with a bottle and two glasses. Both took a long drink, then Carter slowly poured himself another. The glass was rising to his lips when his eye fell on the gray suit. It was a dilapidated looking article, its soft fabric torn and soiled. As he looked a little frown came between his eyes. Placing his glass on the desk, he spoke:

"Harley, why the devil should anyone want that suit?"

Manners shook his head. There was a weary note in his voice as he added that he had worn the suit the

night he had been locked in the garage. It had been thrown on the floor in his closet ready to go into the ragbag. Why anyone should want it he could not imagine. Rising, he went to the table for a last drink. The Scotch had been poured when he suddenly turned, because of something Carter had said.

"One might almost think you had picked up something and hid it in that suit."

For a second Manners gazed at the suit as if he had never seen it before. Then he uttered a short, violent exclamation. While the doctor was examining the woman he had picked up something from the floor of the machine. Two objects had been placed in his pocket. Until Carter's drawling voice had spoken, he had forgotten all about them. Placing his glass upon the table he rushed to the suit and explored the pockets. There should be a little book and a piece of rubber, but though he discovered the piece of rubber, the book could not be found.

With an astonished look upon his face, Carter had watched him. Twice he asked him what it was all about, and even then Manners did not answer. Instead he was looking at the small piece of rubber he held in his hand. If milk bottles had been sealed with rubber caps he would have said this had covered a bottle, for it was a black rubber cap, rather worn, with a tiny hole in the middle. Not until Carter spoke for the third time did he tell him where he had found it.

Though they examined the bit of rubber for some time, in the end they arrived at no conclusion. What it had been used for was beyond their comprehension.

They did, however, decide upon one thing. Absurd as the idea might be, the book was missing, and though the pockets were turned wrongside out it could not be found. They came to one conclusion: The missing book, with the silly bit of rubber, had been the cause of the robbery.

Though it was almost four o'clock, yet they argued. What might be in the book they did not know. Carter reminded his friend that he now had the reason for the attack made upon him and for the attempted robbery. Someone must have been in the machine with the woman. The poisoner had left a clue behind. What the piece of rubber had to do with it all he did not know, perhaps nothing.

It seemed reasonable to Manners. The book explained why the figure had watched the car from behind the hedge, threw some light upon the happening in the garage. It did more than that; apparently it proved that the woman had not been alone in the car. As he voiced these thoughts it was to have Carter give a long yawn and suggest that they go to bed.

He had undressed and was just about to put out the light when there came Carter's voice from the other room. So insistent was the call that Manners crossed the hall to enter the bedroom. He found his friend standing at the head of the bed. The pajamas he was wearing were of a design beyond the imagination of anyone but the most extreme of the cubists. The expression upon his face was an odd one. There came his drawling voice:

"I just happened to remember, Harley, that I looked

at the name on the stern of the boat. The gentleman who owns it had painted his name on the stern."

"Whose boat was it?"

A half yawn escaped Carter's lips. Climbing into bed he pulled the covers under his chin. Over the white counterpane could be seen his eager eyes. For a moment he watched Manners' impatient features.

"Oh," he drawled, "a man you know, Robert Hurd."

CHAPTER XI

THE long shrill ringing of the telephone roused Manners the next morning. As he rolled over in the bed, his first thought was that his housekeeper would answer the call. Then, with a half exclamation, he slid out on the floor as he remembered that the woman was away. When the message had been answered, he went slowly back to his room. It had been only one of Rogan's patrolmen, saying that the chief wished him to drop in at the office at eleven.

It was a little after ten when the long blue roadster drove out of the yard. To Carter's surprise it did not turn toward the city; instead Manners went in the opposite direction. Turning down a driveway, he drove between two long rows of elms and stopped in front of a large house. From the drive could be glimpsed the lake and a rather ugly boathouse on the shore. He watched his friend slide out of the seat and for a moment thought he was going to leave without saying a word. But before going to the house, Manners turned.

"Be back in a moment. This is Hurd's house."

It had been a sudden resolution which caused him to drive to the house of his neighbor. Carter's statement that it was Hurd's boat which had brought the two men to his lawn had been the last straw. There were some things the merchant must explain, but as he asked the woman who answered the doorbell if

Hurd was at home, he knew what the answer would be. By nine, the man would be at his store; it was long after that hour.

The housekeeper had seen the tall, well dressed gentleman, who asked if her employer was at home, before. She knew he owned the white colonial house next door. At the request that she allow him to come into the library and write a little note she opened the door. What was more, she found a piece of paper and even took the faded cover from the old typewriter. But after the gentleman had written the note on the machine he had laughed, saying that after all he could run into the city and see Mr. Hurd at his store.

As Manners climbed back into his car he received a curious glance from Carter. Though it was a questioning look, he made no effort to gratify it. Silently he turned the machine around and headed toward the city. Something pleased him, though behind the satisfaction upon his face lay a suggestion of doubt. He was thinking about something, but what? During the seven-mile drive into the city Manners did not speak.

It was a very business-like chief of police who rose to meet them when they entered his office. The blue coat had been thrown over a chair, and Rogan's sleeves were rolled up. In his hand was a typewritten report apparently covering several sheets of paper. There had been occasions during the last few days when Manners had decided that Rogan was very much bewildered. Now, there was a keen, eager look upon his round face and his eyes sparkled with excitement. For the time being at least, the chief was very much alive.

"I've got that woman's husband locked up," was the first information.

Rogan's plain clothes squad was composed of three men. From the story unfolded, they had been rather active in the last seventy-two hours. There was very little about the murdered woman they did not know. Not that what they had discovered seemed to be of the greatest importance, but several of the side lights thrown upon her character were enlightening.

Before her marriage she had been a stenographer, worked at one time for Hurd. Rogan appeared to think little of this fact, for he added dryly that almost every stenographer in the city had at one time or another worked in the big department store. She left this position to go into Freeman's office. When she married she gave up working, though at intervals she went back to fill in for some girl who was ill. But since her marriage she had never worked longer than two weeks at a time.

She had been a beautiful young woman, bubbling over with life and more or less unconventional in her habits. The various dancing clubs of the city knew her well, as did the road houses scattered along the lake. Not that there was anything against her character, though at times her name had been connected with various men. Just how much had been in these rumors Rogan's detectives had not discovered.

Her marriage had surprised those who knew her. John Russell was not only several years her junior, but he had a reputation of being unable to hold a job longer than six months. Good looking and an excellent

dancer, he had managed in some manner to pass the state pharmacy examinations. Rogan shrugged his shoulders as he added that the man had worked for almost every druggist in the city. The two had met at some road house and had been married three days later. As a marriage, it was not much of a success. From the first the two had quarreled, and the landladies of the various houses where they had roomed all agreed to the same thing; all had heard loud voices, and angry words had frequently passed between the man and his wife.

"You take a woman of that type," commented Carter, "and a drug clerk with thirty dollars a week, and you will have plenty of quarrels, all over money."

"The funny thing about it, Carter," retorted Rogan, "is that they never had a row over money. We don't know where the woman got it, but she seems to have had plenty of money. From the way she spent it she must have had a lot."

He shook his head for a second, going on to tell them that the quarrels were over everything and nothing. As he spoke, Manners could picture the ill-assorted couple, a beautiful, unmoral woman, and a weak failure of a man, who would always be suspicious of his ability to hold the woman he had married. He was not surprised when Rogan repeated some of the accusations the landladies had heard, nor was he surprised to hear that they had separated six months before she died, though for some reason there had been no divorce. Again and again the man had hunted her up, pleading that she come back and live with him. Up until a week

before her death, she had simply laughed at all his requests. Then all at once she had half promised to go with him to New York and start all over again. At the same time she had requested him to get her something.

"What do you think she wanted?" the chief asked.

Both shook their heads, watching Rogan's eager face. For a moment he made no reply, as he picked up a report from the desk, turning the pages as if he wished to refresh his memory. When he did speak there was a dry note in his voice:

"Poison. Curare."

A long, low whistle escaped from Carter's lips as he looked to see if the chief was mocking them. It was a most startling statement, and what it might imply was beyond the powers of Carter and his friend Manners, for the moment, anyway. It was Carter who broke the silence.

"What is that husband of hers trying to do? Make us think she committed suicide?"

"I don't know. Somehow I have an idea he told the truth. I don't see how under heavens he would name that poison unless she did ask for it."

"He knows what killed his wife," was the answer.

"He might know that. Unless he did it himself, however, I can't see how he would know. The story had been kept from the papers, though they have it now; he was arrested before the papers were on the streets. We never allowed the news of the autopsy to leak out. So that's that. Yet he says she came into Campbell's, where he was working, and asked him to get her curare."

"Did he?"

Russell had told the chief that not only had he refused to get her the poison but added that he would not have known where to get it. He qualified the statement to mean in the city. The police had questioned every druggist; not one had the drug or had ever carried it. The husband had told the truth when he said that he would have been unable to procure it in the city. Why his wife wished the poison he did not know, and she had refused to give him any information. The request had startled him, for the drug was extremely rare, and he could not understand his wife's asking for it.

What had been behind the woman's request? Rogan had no theories to advance, nor did Carter, but Manners was moved to voice his thoughts. First, did the chief believe the man had told the truth? Rogan did, and said so emphatically. Unless he had killed his wife he could not have known the poison used. Even Manners' retort that he might have guessed it from the evidence produced at the inquest did not impress the chief. He had a very small opinion of the intelligence and shrewdness of the woman's husband.

But there was another idea he wanted discussed. Accepting the story as true, would they say that the person guilty of her death had tried to have her secure the poison, knowing that when the fact came out it would seem to be suicide? This idea Carter accepted, though he appeared a little doubtful. Rogan however was not convinced, it seemed a bit absurd. But to Manners there appeared to be no other explanation.

"Why did you lock Russell up?"

"Well," came the reply, "for several reasons. First of all he was expected to work Saturday evening and did not. He went to work about six and a few moments later received a telephone call. Whatever it was it did excite him. He hung up his white jacket, took his hat and dashed out. It was raining hard at the time, but he took no umbrella or raincoat. We tried to trace the call, but——"

The arms went sweeping out in an expressive gesture. Bending down he took a box of stogies from the desk and, though he knew the two men would not touch them, made an offer of extending the box. The horrified refusal of Carter amused him, and he chuckled as he lighted his. Taking a half dozen puffs he shifted his position in the chair.

"Now, where he was between Saturday night, when he rushed out of the drug store, and this morning, we don't know. He won't talk. He was pretty much frightened when we picked him up in his rooming house. But I expect he will talk soon. Got him locked up in a narrow cell, dark as your hat, and we keep hinting certain things will happen. He's yellow and he'll talk soon."

The calmness with which the chief had said that the man would talk caused Carter to grin. He could see that cell; it might be wide enough for him to turn about in, but he doubted it. And it would be dark, very dark, with queer sounds floating out of the blackness. Every little while someone would come and throw open the slide in the door of the cell, someone who would

mention horrible things which might happen if he refused much longer to tell where he had been.

He tried to joke with the chief, saying that no good police station allowed the third degree. His attempts at humor were not a success. Rogan simply replied that he thought that before evening the man would talk. He did say that the husband and wife had quarreled on the morning of her death. What it was over he did not know, for it had taken place upon a street corner. Then he dropped this subject for another.

He wanted to know all about their capture of the gangster, for Rogan assured them the man was a gangster. He had seen too many in his career to be mistaken about this man. They had been unable to identify him and his finger prints were not in the files, but they had sent the prints to the larger cities and might hear from them. So far he had refused to talk, but the chief was not surprised at that. What he wanted to know was what was back of the affair?

Manners told him that was a question they were unable to answer. Every detail of the night attack was told. He mentioned how Carter had found his soiled gray suit on the lawn. For the first time Rogan heard of the little book, the piece of rubber, was told that the book was missing, but the rubber cap was in Manners' desk.

"A round piece of rubber," suggested Rogan.

Told he had described it, with a shrug of his shoulders the chief said no doubt it had come off the end of the shifting rod. Many people put a rubber cap over this rod. A little disgusted at not thinking of it,

Manners admitted that the chief's suggestion was without a doubt so. But the missing book must be found; it would explain the attempts to enter his house.

"But what I cannot see," he protested, "is how anyone knew I had found the thing, and that it was in my suit."

"That's easy," commented Carter. "Use your head. I remember you said you picked those things up while the doctor was examining the body. Both doors of the car were opened. Whoever was behind the hedge could see you. That explains the attempt to bump you off by the carbon monoxide route."

"How did he know who followed him?"

"You told me, Harley," said Carter, "that there was someone behind that hedge. When that individual heard the sound of your fall, what would he think? Why that Professor Harley Manners was snooping around in the dark. He knew where the chief and his policemen were. You were the only one not placed."

It sounded reasonable enough, and Manners decided that Carter had described what had taken place. But how it was known that he had forgotten about the book he could not see. Carter's comment was that, as the police had not said anything about its being found, it could be assumed the book was missing. As an answer it was not the finest bit of reasoning he had heard, but it would have to do.

"Oh Rogan," drawled Carter, "we forgot to tell you, those men landed on Manners' shore in a row boat. It belonged to your friend Hurd."

A long suspicious look came from under Rogan's

shaggy eyebrows. As Carter nodded, the chief's jaw snapped shut. A hand went rustling through a mass of papers. He rose and carefully cleared half the surface of the desk, then sorted out some typewritten papers. As he did so Manners slipped a hand into a pocket. The tone in his voice caused the two men to look at him in surprise. In his hand he was waving a piece of paper.

"I went over to Hurd's this morning, told his house-keeper I wanted to leave a message, and asked if I could use his typewriter. Here is the sheet of paper, and it's my idea you will find that the machine which wrote these few lines wrote also the letters you received."

If he had expected to astonish the chief he was disappointed. Rogan did not even take the paper from his extended hand. He gave it one glance, then looked down at his desk. There he had arranged two groups of papers, typewritten sheets. He pointed to them as he spoke.

"Here are the seven letters, and the other two sheets are the communication Jim Green got at the paper. So far as I can make out, both the letters sent me and the pages given Green were written on the same machine."

They bent over the desk. Sheet after sheet was picked up and examined, then compared with the few lines Manners had written with Hurd's machine. The same typewriter had written them all. Because of the worn type, and the fact that it was out of alignment, it needed no expert to make the analysis. In every case

the letters had the same shadings, the identical places where the letters were worn away.

"No matter what we do," came Rogan's dry comment, "we always run into Hurd. He wrote those letters to me, wrote the attack upon Wood. Manners came near kicking off in his garage. Now that boat—" Suddenly he swore, then shot out: "We will be going after him soon."

There was no reply. Manners reached down to pick up the article the editor had not published. When he handed it to Carter it was with the thought that he had never read a more violent attack upon a public man. Not that the charges against the minister amounted to anything, and he doubted if a court would have allowed a libel suit, but the merchant had attacked the man's religious and social viewpoints, hinted that women came into his study and had ended that no good citizen could support such a church. If the minister had not died the article would have been published and, because of Hurd's position, would have made trouble.

As Carter silently placed the three sheets of paper upon the desk, he made no comment. It is true there was a disgusted look upon his face, and he did go to the wash stand in the corner and carefully wash his hands, but he said nothing, and they knew there was no need for words. What he had done spoke for itself.

For a while no one spoke. Upon the chief's face was a moody determined expression, as if he had made up his mind to go through with a task which he would

both dread and at the same time find pleasant. Manners knew what the chief was thinking about—that interview he would have with Hurd. He had but one desire, that when it took place he might be present. There were several questions he wished to ask his next door neighbor.

“Rogan,” asked Carter, “suppose you tell us why that woman and her husband busted up. Did she work?”

The information was a bit vague. There had been several times when she had gone to work in an office, but these times were few and she did not work longer than two weeks. She dressed well, and for the last three months had secured a car from somewhere—

“A lady of easy virtue,” was Carter’s dry comment.

But the chief was not of this opinion. So far as her morality was concerned, he had discovered nothing against her. She had been seen in various road houses, been in the company of a number of the men of the town. These had been interviewed and, without exception, said they knew nothing against her virtue. The fact that she could carry a good deal of liquor and liked to run around at all hours of the night was about all the chief had against her.

“But Rogan, she must have had a good deal of money passing through her hands. Where did she get it? Was she ever in trouble?”

There came a shake of the big head, followed by a sudden laugh.

“The customs officials pinched her once. It was a good joke on our government man here. We razzed

him for weeks about it. She had a craze for the water and used to sail up and down the lake in that old tub of Tommy Freeman's. She was working for him then. It's only thirty miles to Canada, and she would sail over once in a while—"

"Is it a small boat?" inquired Carter.

"Oh not so small, an old tub, but seaworthy. She could make Canada in three hours. Everybody goes over since Prohibition. Frazer nabbed her one day for bringing in booze. She had ten cases in her boat, but they were cases of puddings and that sort of stuff. She had a right to bring them over duty free. The papers razzed Frazer because the very same day he stopped her, five hundred cases of Scotch were run in."

As he laughed, Manners remembered the statement of Montaigne, that we find pleasure in the misfortune of our friends. A little smile played around Carter's lips, but there was a thoughtful line etched above his brow. He might have spoken if a patrolman had not thrust his head through the door and motioned to the chief. Excusing himself, Rogan left the room.

It was some time before he returned and he had a favor to ask. Would they excuse him and at the same time take one of his tasks upon their shoulders? Agreeing, they were surprised to have him ask the question, did clergymen have secretaries? Told that they did, he muttered something under his breath. Then he said that Wood's secretary was over to the church and wished to see someone from the station. It was the first hint he had received that the minister

had had a secretary. He added, that if he had known, she would have been a witness at the inquest. Would they run over to the church and see what she had to relate?

They were both glad to leave the office. Manners always felt depressed when he came into the room, the feeling being caused by the fact that it was under the street level and was very dingy. There was always a stuffy atmosphere about the place and always the sound of someone going up or down the corridor. The bright sunlight was refreshing after the drabness of the office, and they decided to walk to the church.

Newsboys were calling out the first edition of the afternoon papers. They were doing a rushing business, for they were informing the city for the first time that Marjorie Russell had died from poison. As he listened to their shrill voices, Manners noticed that they said nothing about her being murdered. That suspicion Rogan had managed to keep out of the news.

They had only a block to walk to the church, and upon their arrival found the door unlocked. The hall they entered seemed very silent, and there was a stuffy odor in the air. Deciding that the girl must be in the study, they descended the steps to the basement, then walked the length of the church. Through the kitchen they passed, turning to go up the flight of steps which led to the study, a study whose door was open.

As they stood looking into the room, they saw first the girl seated in the chair by the desk, a girl who raised a tear stained face to look in their direction, one who would have been rather pretty if her eyes

had not been red with weeping or the red lips could have ceased their quivering. Across from her sat an anxious looking woman about fifty.

It was Manners who told them their names, saying that they had come to the study at the request of the chief of police. When he had finished, the girl half rose to her feet, only to sink back again in the chair. Her face was twisted with emotion as she vainly tried to keep back the tears in her eyes. She studied him as if trying to decide whether she should speak. Then came a stifled sob and the first broken, indistinguishable words. In a moment she gained control of herself, though her voice trembled as she spoke:

"That woman, who was found in the automobile, she was in to see Dr. Wood Saturday evening—" The voice hesitated and died away for a second, then it returned, "I was away, did not know he, he died—until this morning. And that woman was here Saturday night."

CHAPTER XII

THE words faded from the girl's lips. Dropping into a chair, she buried her head on the desk. Her shoulders were shaking with emotion, and the outstretched hands trembled. The woman rushed to the girl's side, bending down to whisper in her ear. Not knowing what to say the two men threw an embarrassed look at each other then glanced away. Both knew what the other was thinking.

For the first time a connection had been made between the two deaths. The stenographer's tearful words had established one fact. The clergyman had known the woman, and she had been in the study only a brief while before her death. Manners knew that it was rather unusual for a clergyman to see visitors in his church study on a Saturday night. No doubt the woman had made the appointment, but for what purpose?

Recovering to a degree her composure, in a shaking voice the girl introduced the elderly woman as her mother. Her name was Margaret Ayre. It was plain to see her employer had filled a great place in her life. If she had not been crying, the face turned toward the two men would have been very attractive. There was not only beauty in the fine features, but also character and signs of a fine intelligence. She might be twenty-five, but no older.

She studied them gravely for a moment, as though

trying to decide why they had come in place of the police. As though assured by what she saw, a smile trembled across her lips as she motioned for them to take chairs. She was trying hard to keep her feelings under control, making a brave struggle to be composed. Her first statement caused them to understand why she had been so highly wrought up. It was only an hour ago that she had heard of the minister's death.

She had been out of the city since early Sunday morning. The farm was twenty miles from a railroad. Her mother had gone with her, and no one had thought to telephone of the tragedy. Not until she arrived in the city an hour ago had she heard that her employer was dead. She had come directly from the train to the study. On the very steps of the church she had bought a paper which told her that the clergyman had been murdered, a paper which had on the front page also a picture of Marjorie Russell. The recollection unnerved her, and they saw a shudder sweep over her body. As she did not speak there came the soft tones of Carter's voice.

"Miss Ayre, suppose we ask you a few questions. It will save time and make it easier for you. You say the woman, Mrs. Russell, was in the study Saturday night. How do you know?"

It was a startled face which looked back at him. "Why, I saw her," came the astonished voice.

They saw in a moment why she had been surprised at the question. She had assumed that they would know she had seen her. They were informed that it was very unusual for her employer to be at the church

afternoons and that he was never in the study evenings. But last Saturday she had received a telephone call asking if she would mind coming back to the church in the evening. A woman wished to see him.

She saw that they both failed to comprehend why it was necessary for her to be at the church in the evening. They were told of the people who insisted upon seeing the minister, people who needed advice, those without friends, hopeless and helpless. Then there were many neurotics, who received scant attention from the busy clergyman. Many cases he turned over to her, for she had been trained in social work. There was nothing unusual in the request that she come to the church in the evening; the unusual thing was that the minister should come.

The woman had entered the study a little before seven, rushed in, so she put it, excited and angry. To Manners' question she replied that the woman was wearing a coat, an imported raincoat, as she had observed at the time. She would not tell her errand until the minister had motioned for the secretary to leave the room. She had stepped from the study into the church and seated herself in a pew near the door.

The interview had lasted almost thirty minutes. At first the woman had done all the talking, and her voice had been pitched high and was decidedly angry in tone. She was complaining about someone, though the words could not be distinguished. Later, the clergyman must have calmed his visitor, for the woman's voice died down and she could hear the minister talking, very earnestly and slowly. What they talked about she did

not know. It was almost half past seven when the woman came out. At the door she turned to say: "I am going to see him anyway." Who it was she intended seeing the secretary did not know.

She had told all this in a rather low voice, as if every sentence brought back memories of the scene. The voice was soft and a little husky, the inflection very musical. When she finished, they could see she had nothing more to say. Yet when Carter made some sympathetic remark about her long, lonely wait in the church, her answer startled them.

"Oh, I was not alone. Her husband came in shortly after she went into the study."

"Her husband?" was the startled question.

"Yes. I had been in the church about ten minutes when a man came in. He was very excited and asked me if a Mrs. Russell was in the study. I did not know the woman's name but as he described her I knew it was the lady in the study with Dr. Wood. I thought he would rush through the door when I told him, but he quieted down and seated himself in the pew back of mine. He was rather worked up over something. After a few moments he said he was her husband and that he wanted to see her.

The secretary had a vivid touch of description and they could see the excited man sitting in the front pew and waiting for his wife to come out. From what the girl had just said they judged that the husband was angry; perhaps not so much angry as excited. He did not wait until his wife's interview was over, but left the church about ten minutes before she came through

the study door. The secretary did not know if he had waited outside the church or not; she apparently had not been interested. The nervous excited woman who had come from the study had held all of her attention.

Her voice died away and it was clear to see she thought there was nothing more to tell. Manners cast a quick look at his friend. There was a puzzled, disturbed expression upon Carter's face and his brow was wrinkled. As he caught the glance he half shook his head, as if to say that what it all might be about he could not say. A hand went into his pocket and came forth with his cigarette case. As his eyes saw the case he gave a start and thrust it back into his pocket.

"Miss Ayre, after the woman left, you of course saw Dr. Wood. Was he disturbed by the woman's visit?"

"He was very much disturbed," was the quick reply. "I went right into the study and he was walking back and forth. It was my impression that he was very much shocked by something, for he told me he had never had his faith in humanity so much shaken as it had been in the last thirty minutes, said it would be hard ever to trust people again."

"What did he mean by that?" broke in Manners.

The girl shook her head. The expression had been delivered in a voice filled with sorrow. What the words had implied she did not know. The clergyman had seated himself before the desk and with his head in his hands had remained silent for a few moments. When he did speak it was to tell her she could go and that he would be leaving himself in a few moments.

He rose when she went to the door, saying he hoped her trip to the country would be pleasant. He had tried to smile as he said good-by, but the girl had thought the smile rather forced.

"Did he expect to see anyone else that evening?" was Carter's question.

"Not that I know of. He said he had a letter to write, but that was all—"

Her voice came to a sudden pause. Across the fine face there swept a shadow. Suddenly she rose to her feet and, with both hands gripping the table, looked wildly at her questioners. Her voice trembled as fear and anguish mingled in the excited words.

"Who could—could have killed him? He was so good a man, so kind to everybody. Who could have done it?"

Dropping back into her chair she bent her head upon the desk and sobbed as if all control had vanished. Her mother came to her side, throwing an arm around her shoulders and whispering in her ear. It was some time before the sobs died away. When she raised her head it was to turn a tear stained face in their direction and in a broken voice apologize for her display of emotion, an apology which they felt was not needed.

Before they left the secretary was told that she would have to repeat her story to the chief. What she had said was too important to be given him second-hand. At her request Manners called the police station and for once managed to get Rogan. In a few brief sentences he told the official it was very necessary he

hear the girl's story himself, and suggested that he bring a stenographer. When they left the room they knew it would only be a few moments before the chief would be in the study.

As they stood by the long roadster, Carter turned a very grave face to his friend. No longer was he care-free, with irresponsible, laughing features. Instead the eyes had become cold and stern and the little yellow mustache seemed to bristle. His very manner had changed, and the voice which spoke was crisp and short.

"Harley, we've got to do something. God knows just what is back of that girl's story, but it's done one thing. It's linked the two crimes. Just how we do not know, but we have a start. Now let's forget it and have lunch down town. After that I have a visit to make before we return to the house."

They had lunch at the Lakeland Hotel. Carter had made a violent protest about eating in the Westland Club. Manners was told that even to enter it again would leave a mark upon Carter's life which years of good living would not efface. He would eat anywhere, even in the cheapest lunch wagon of the city, but, God helping him, he would not step one foot inside that morgue Manners called a club. So lunch was eaten in the hotel, a table being placed in a corner where they could look down to the blue waters of the bay.

Though there were a hundred questions trembling on his lips, Manners managed to keep them back. Carter did not care even to mention the story they had heard in the study. He knew that though his friend

was laughing and talking as they ate, yet at the same time his mind was analyzing what the girl had told them. The time would come when Carter would wish to go into every detail of that story. For the present, though he would have liked to put his questions, it was better to wait.

It had been Carter's suggestion that they eat in the city, and he had said that he must make one call before they returned to the house. This surprised Manners. Carter knew no one in the city, with the exception of himself and Rogan. Before they walked out of the hotel the waiter was asked to bring the city directory to their table and for several moments Carter ran through the thick pages. When they climbed into the machine he requested that Manners drive to the office of the United States Customs.

Because the city had one of the finest harbors upon the Great Lakes, it was a port of entry, having its own custom officials. They were housed in a rather ugly granite building which stood on the top of the hill that ran down to the public dock. From its steps one could see the shining surface of the lake; two miles across the water lay the wooded shore of the peninsula.

Though he wondered why they were entering the customs office, he soon discovered that Carter knew whom he wished to see. He asked for the chief official and, though the boy appeared a little doubtful if he could be seen, he was soon persuaded that it was policy to take them into the rear office. As they came through the door the tall lanky man who stood gazing out of the window turned with a rather surprised look upon

his face. It was evident that it was not the usual custom for unannounced visitors to walk into his offices.

Giving his name, Carter took something from his inside pocket, which he placed in the hand of the revenue man. Manners could not see what the object was, some little shining token a little larger than a quarter, but the sight of it caused a great change in the manner and greeting they received. There was not only respect in the way the man brought forward two chairs, but the glance he kept shooting at Carter contained a great deal of curiosity. A box of cigars was produced from a drawer and after each had lighted one, the government official sat back and waited for Carter to give a reason for this visit.

For a few moments there did not seem to be any reason for their call. Carter mentioned the weather, spoke of the beauty of the lake, even told a story which was new and fairly humorous. The revenue man listened, though it was clear to see that he was waiting for them to tell the real reason for being in his office. And at last it came, after Carter had placed the cigar on a tray and rather thoughtlessly lighted one of his own cigarettes.

"We were talking this morning with the chief of police—and he mentioned the fact that some time ago you searched the boat in which Mrs. Russell came over from Canada. I was a little interested in his story."

The eyes of the official opened wide in astonishment at the remark. At the same time a flush crept over his cheeks, and it was plain to be seen that the episode

was one he would have liked to have forgotten. With a laugh he placed his cigar on the edge of the desk and bent forward in his chair.

"We did. Made darn fools of ourselves. You see there is a lot of stuff run in here from across the lake. There is enough booze to float any battleship ever made. We have little to do with that, the prohibition officials are presumed to have that to themselves." A sarcastic smile passed over his face as he mentioned the other Federal group. There was not much love lost between them, and Manners knew that the older group of officials had little use for the department which had been created when the Volstead act was passed. But no one made any comment and the official continued:

"About the time we picked her up we had been having tips that somebody was running a lot of woolen cloth across the lake. It was a rather unusual thing to smuggle in, but somebody had found out that English woolens cost a good deal less in Canada than they do here. We got the party in the end, but while we were trying to pick them up we searched a number of boats, one of which was being used by that woman who just died."

"And you found nothing?" Was Carter's query.

The man flushed. "In a sense, no." His head went back and he laughed at the recollection. "We did find a number of cases on the boat, but they contained puddings, jam and that sort of thing, the rather well known brands. She told us, which was true, that she

had a right to bring in a hundred dollars' worth of stuff, that she and her friends were very fond of the English sweets. They were cheaper in Canada."

"Not so very much cheaper, and it seems a queer thing to fill up a boat with."

The official agreed, adding that the papers had gotten hold of the thing and played it up on the first page. It caused a good laugh in the city and for some days everyone was having a little fun at his expense. Becoming serious, he informed them that what had happened might take place any time. It was their duty to search boats which went across the lake and made no declarations upon their return.

"She sailed over often?"

"A number of times during the summer, she seemed to have a number of men with boats on a string and they let her use them. As I remember, the day we got in bad she was sailing Freeman's old tub. I got suspicious over her trips, and my first thought was that she was bootlegging for someone. It turned out she had no racket at all."

He laughed again, though Manners could tell he was rather surprised at the way the conversation had gone. Why should Carter be interested? He wondered himself. But he was, for he asked if the tins the woman had brought across had been sealed. He was informed they were all sealed. They had opened three. All had contained puddings and jams.

As they rose to leave, Carter apologized for taking up the official's time. With a laugh, the man was told that Manners had been with the chief when the body

was discovered, a statement so near the facts that Manners let it go unchallenged. Because of this, the story of her being picked up by the customs official had interested them. Carter had thought he would like to hear it from the official's own lips.

But as they drove away, Manners wondered if it had been worth staying in the hot city, when they could have been sitting under the shade of his trees. When his friend started to whistle softly, he knew that the official had not been given the real reason for their visit. Carter never whistled except when he was a little excited. Though his face was as calm as the sky above them, yet the merry little tune which came from his lips told that inwardly he was pleased. They did not go directly to the house. He had to stop at the telegraph office while Carter sent off a telegram.

They spent the rest of the afternoon upon the lawn. Two easy chairs were taken from the porch and placed in the shade of the largest trees. Books and magazines were placed on a little table. While the men read, the dog went plunging in and out of the water, returning once in awhile to coax his master to take a swim. Far down the beach children were playing in the sand, their noisy laughter drifting up to the lawn.

But under the tree was a peaceful silence. Carter had changed to a white silk suit and, with a new mystery story in his hand, was lost to the world. A robin came over the grass and for a while watched the motionless figures in the chairs. Even the sound of an airplane far above their heads did not cause them to look to the sky. Once in a while they heard a car go

past on the road, but when the sound died away the lawn again became a place of silence.

For a while Manners looked at the magazines upon the table. When the last one had been thrown aside, he decided that Carter's mystery story must be more interesting than what he had been reading. Evidently it was not, for with a yawn his friend allowed the book to fall to the grass, and dug into his pocket for a cigarette. When it was lighted he turned his chair around until he faced Manners.

"Harley, what do think of the yarn the girl told?"

Glad at the chance to voice his questions, Manners went into details. First of all it was his impression that the two crimes were now linked. Whoever had killed the woman had also killed the minister. What the reason might be he did not know, but it would be the same in both cases. But there were things he wanted to know. Did Carter think the minister had known the woman before she came to his office? What had she told him? Why had she said what she did when she left the study? Why should the minister have been so disturbed? As the eager voice ran on, Carter threw out his hands in a gesture of helplessness.

"You know as much about it as I do. I do think that we now know why they were killed. Her going to the minister is the most interesting thing of it all. He was a big man in the city, but there must have been another reason for her going to see him. No doubt he was given the low down on some person he knew, someone he trusted and admired. That seems logical, for what was

said disturbed him greatly. That thirty-minute visit to his study caused his death."

"You believe that, George?"

"I can see no other reason. It must have been revelation of something crooked by her, concerning a person the minister knew well. Then she lost her head, went to the individual she had named, and taunted him with the fact that Wood knew of his wrong doing. She might have been murdered even if she had never gone to that study, but at least Wood would have been safe."

"And you think the murderer is someone rather well known?"

"That's my impression. It must have been an individual known to the minister. He said his faith in human nature had received its greatest shock. I don't know much about ministers, but men of his sort do not respect people unless they deserve it. But there is another thing that interests me."

"What?"

"What had that unknown individual been doing? In order to keep it from the public he was willing to kill two people."

"Her husband, you think?"

Carter threw him a disgusted look as he shook his head. He went on to say that if the woman's story had shocked the minister, it could not have been the name of the drug clerk which had been mentioned. The odds were that the minister had never heard of her husband, and if he had would have no interest in the man. Then with a short laugh he lighted another cigarette.

They discussed the woman for a while. She was pictured as a pleasure loving neurotic, not made for marriage or any sort of responsibility, a good companion at a party, no doubt, able to drink a great deal of liquor without showing the effects, but the type of woman who would fly into a violent rage, and, when angry, would say and do things which she would later regret. It was in such a rage that she had gone to the minister, and there had been a double purpose in her heart. She must talk to someone—and she wished revenge.

“She was still angry when she left the church,” was Carter’s dry comment.

This Manners was willing to admit. No doubt she was more angry when she left the study than when she came in. If she had done what they thought she did, gone to the man whose name she had given the clergyman, and told him what she had done, she must have been angry. And this action had caused two deaths.

Carter nodded, saying that when a woman of that type went to pieces one could always be sure the man in the case had thrown her over. But the chief had said that she had no lover. As she rarely worked, and spent a good deal of money, she must have secured it from someone. No doubt the fact that this money was cut off had been the thing which had made her angry. He might have added more, but the colored woman appeared on the veranda and called that dinner would be ready in ten minutes.

As they walked over the grass, Manners was pondering over Carter’s argument. It was what he believed

himself, though he did wonder if they would ever know the truth of that visit to the study. Entering the house, Carter started up the stairs to go to his room. He was almost at the landing when Manners called. Turning he had to smile at the sober face which was looking upward.

"You know, George, that woman was up to something."

The answer which came floating down the stairway was to be in Manners' mind all through the dinner.

"Sure she was. And I have a pretty good idea what she was mixed up in."

CHAPTER XIII

At nine that evening they received a visit from Rogan. The call surprised them, for when they had left him at noon he had not mentioned that he was coming to the house. He would not come up to the veranda and refused to leave his car; he was going to make a call upon Hurd and wished them to go along.

Climbing into the faded red machine they crowded upon the one seat of the coupé. Why the chief had determined that they should go with him they could not tell, but Rogan had been very demanding and, though the words had been an invitation, yet his tone was a half command. His heavy head was slightly thrown to side, the faded soft hat pulled over one eye. The chief was on the war path, and for the time being did not care to talk.

Twilight was creeping over the lake, touching the lawn with a hint of coming darkness. As they came out on the road, there was a fleeting glimpse of the lake, its surface dancing under the light of the setting sun. Behind the green hedges were the trees, tall outlines against the sky. A lone crow, an etched mass of black motion, was gliding down to a distant field.

Why Rogan had come out of the city to make an evening call upon Hurd puzzled Manners. Any time during the day the chief could have stepped out of his office, walked across the street and entered the man's

store. Evidently he desired to see him alone and in the presence of two witnesses. Thinking this, he wondered if any new facts had developed during the afternoon.

It was only a short drive, but when the car came to a pause before the brick house not a word had been spoken. It would have been a useless effort to talk to the driver of the car. His set, fixed jaw, the determined angle in which he carried his head, told that he would not welcome speech. Manners noticed Carter throw a quick glance at the determined face, saw the little amused smile which followed the look.

With the chief very much in the lead, they went up the steps of the veranda and stood waiting before the screen door. They could look into the hall and see the open doors leading from each side of the passage, but for all they saw or heard the house might be deserted.

The bell rang, a shrill, thin clatter in the stillness. There was a wait before the summons was answered; and, long before they saw the individual coming to the door, they heard slow footsteps descending the stairway, slow, dragging footsteps, as though the person was reluctant to be disturbed. Then out of the semi gloom of the hall came the tall figure of the merchant. Slowly he walked down the passage, coming to a halt behind the screen door.

That there was any welcome in the sour glance he threw over them, they doubted. The thin narrow lips were a tight line of hatred, the glance cold and calculating. His eyes went to the chief, passed to Manners, then came to a rest upon Carter's tall, well

dressed figure. The white silk suit was observed, the light blue necktie studied, as a sarcastic smile crossed the thin lips. Then, standing to one side, he flung the door open and asked them to enter.

Without a word he led them half way down the long hall. Instead of turning into the small library, he motioned them into a dim room at the end of the passage. As they stood in the center of the room, it appeared that he might not turn on a light, but after a slight pause he walked over the floor and the room sprang into being. It had once been used for a living room; now it would be difficult to tell just what to call it. Library chairs crowded upon dining room furniture, and three tables were placed in odd corners.

Though they were not asked to be seated, they found chairs and waited for Hurd to speak. It was evident he did not intend to be the first to break the silence. Standing directly under the center light, his eyes never turned away from Rogan. The expression upon his face was not pleasant, though Manners found the look difficult to analyze; contempt seemed mingled with anger, and behind the expression was a hint of fear.

The cold reception did not bother the chief. He threw a cold, fleeting look at the merchant, and his hand went digging into a pocket. When it was brought forth, and waved in the air, a number of sheets of paper were in it. For a second Rogan gave them a glance, then slowly rose to his feet. There was a cold determined expression up his face.

"It's time for a showdown Hurd," came the cold, hard voice. "You wrote those letters?"

The sheets of paper were waved in the air. The gesture was not extended, but both Carter and Manners knew what the chief was holding, the seven letters, over whose contents he had spent many disturbed moments. They could tell from the scowl upon Hurd's face that he knew what they were. For a moment they thought he would make no reply. If he had dared, the man would have ordered them out of his house. There was a sneer upon his face as he replied:

"What are you talking about? Have you suddenly gone crazy?"

"Crazy," snapped out the chief as his eyes flashed with rage, "crazy, is it? If there is anyone crazy in this room, it's yourself. Now let's have a showdown. I know you wrote these letters, sent me one every day for a week."

"Prove it," was the snarl.

"Prove it," came the half laugh. "Easy. The same typewriter wrote these that wrote that damned article you took to the paper. Any expert upon writing will testify to that. And you don't get away with it. Fine sort of a citizen you are, brave man. Sent your chief of police seven letters, and had not the nerve to sign your name. But you don't get away with it with me."

There was an insult in the rough voice, as though he was trying to force the man into an angry outburst. Contempt mingled with the sneer upon his voice. The tone caused a flush to come into Hurd's face and his eyes sparkled. For a second they thought he would try to snatch the papers from Rogan's hands. His voice shook with passion as he tried to speak.

"I wrote those letters, Rogan, and I write what I wish. I need no interference from you. Let me make that plain. I do what I wish. No thick-headed cop, and one a stranger in the city, can tell me—"

"You make what plain to me?" broke in the sneering voice of the chief. "Get me Hurd, and get me right. I don't give a damn for your money or your position in this town. You think you are better than most of the people. Why, they think you are a bigoted fanatic. Now listen and listen hard. There have been two murders. You knew both the victims. One was killed beside your hedge; the other was your minister. For a week before they died you were writing me unsigned letters—"

He paused, as his fists clenched shut—"unsigned letters. You said there was evil in the city, and you would take care of it. Manners was almost killed in your garage. Last night your boat landed on his beach and two men got out of it and tried to rob his house. You write what you wish, do you? Get this. You come across or, rich man or not, I will arrest you and throw you into a cell. Then you can talk through a lawyer. And believe me the town will know about it."

The chief stopped, mostly because he was out of breath. He had worked himself into a rage, throwing forth all the fear and unrest of the past week. With his square jaw thrust forward, he glared at the owner of the house. There was no sign of weakness in his face, and they knew that the threat to arrest Hurd had been a real one. Rogan was angry, boiling over

with rage. With his head thrown back he waited for an answer.

Hurd had listened to the spluttering voice with a face which had steadily grown more enraged. The first flush of red had faded from his cheeks, and his face had become very white; then the veins upon his forehead became swollen with angry blood, and his face grew so red that Manners wondered if the man might not be on the verge of a stroke. The fists were clenched, the fingers spread out in a threatening gesture. As Rogan ended, and walked directly in front of the merchant, the two men stared angrily at each other. Manners noticed Hurd's twitching lips, saw his teeth clench shut. Then he burst out in a wild harangue.

As Manners listened to the spluttering incoherent words, he knew he was listening to a man on the verge of a mental breakdown. The pent up repressions and rages of months came pouring from the trembling, angry lips. Hurd might be a wealthy man, but Manners could see only a narrow, bigoted man, whose speech showed his contempt for those standing before him. In the mood he was in, at that moment, Hurd was capable of committing murder.

His harangue was a mixture of threats, warnings and excuses. He yelled out that he had written the letters, saying they needed to be written. Evil was abroad in the city, evil which the police would not overcome; but when he tried to describe this evil, he became incoherent. Part of it seemed to be due to the liberalism of the man who had been his minister. All

the fanaticism in his soul leaped forth as he yelled out that the clergyman's death had been the very act of God, a punishment for the betrayal of religious beliefs which Hurd held sacred. In writing the article to the paper, he had only done his duty. Manners had heard this excuse before, often used by intolerant people as a defense for some act of sadistic cruelty.

When the merchant finished speaking, he walked over to a chair and sank down exhausted. The thin face was white, and he could not control the trembling of his hands. In the uneasy silence, Rogan cast a helpless glance at his companions. The wild, incoherent speech not only had startled him but, for the time being, had destroyed all chance for further questions. What to do, he hardly knew. As he looked at Manners he received a motion toward the hall. When they nervously left the room, the exhausted figure in the chair did not even observe that they had left.

Out on the lawn, Rogan turned a sheepish face back at the house. The look was expressive; the shrug of his shoulder spoke volumes. For a moment he gazed at the screen door, as if he expected to see it thrust open and Hurd come running down on the grass. Then he turned to Manners.

"Crazy."

The professor shook his head. Hurd was far from crazy, though he was a fanatic, a mass of repressions and complexes. He might some day go to pieces and become a neurotic wreck, but he was not crazy. The opinion caused the chief to mutter that, though he might not be crazy, he acted like it to him, an observa-

tion which brought a laugh from Carter's lips and caused him to slap Rogan on the back.

At Manners' driveway the chief stopped the car, refusing to come to the house. They climbed out, said good-by, only to have Rogan suddenly shut off his engine and thrust his head through the open window. The round face which looked down at them was serious, and there was an appealing question in his eyes.

"You know—" came his voice—"—that if I were not so sure Russell bumped off his wife, I would have an idea Hurd was the man."

"So you have made up your mind it was Russell?" ventured Carter.

Though Rogan nodded, yet there was a doubtful note in his voice. He wanted to know who else there was to have any suspicion about. Russell had quarreled with his wife; she had left him; he was in a position to get the poison. How did they explain his rushing out of the store on the night of her death, his going to the church? It was his opinion that the woman had called the store, saying she did not intend to go to New York with him. In his jealous rage, he had killed her. When he finished, his eyes searched their faces for a confirmation of his theory.

"Rogan," drawled Carter, "you may be the brainiest police chief this evil town has. Hurd will agree with the evil though not with the first part of my remark. Your theory may be correct; I can see that at present there is no other; but I have one question, and it seems to knock your theory full of holes." He lighted a cigarette and smiled up at the anxious face at the window. "I

am willing to admit one thing, chief," he went on, "your case would just knock a jury silly; that is, if you had only the woman to consider. Think how it would sound, all the usual betrayed husband stuff. But you know darned well, Rogan, you can't fit that moronic drug clerk into the minister's death. He simply won't fit in."

"I—" began Rogan, only to be stopped by a wave of Carter's hand.

"Listen, Rogan. These bizarre crimes are the things the police and public go silly over, yet you know that the hardest murder to solve is the commonplace affair. You will find in the end that this crime, with its double killing, is after all a simple crime. If the husband is guilty, it's a crime of revenge. You know it was not premeditated. Late in the afternoon of the day she died, he expected they would soon leave the city together, so, up to a few hours of the time she was killed, he had no idea of killing her. But if it was revenge, what under heaven did he have against that minister?"

"You tell," was the growling retort.

"I can't tell you," came the answer. "After all, Rogan, I came up here to pass a vacation. Behold I walk in on a double murder, and the crimes interest me, but I don't know any more about it than you do, and I don't think that's very much."

There might have been a retort, but the chief glanced at his watch. Alarmed by what he saw, he said they could talk it over some other time. They watched his car vanish around the bend in the road; then they turned down the driveway. Darkness had fallen and,

as they came past the garage, they saw that the housekeeper had turned on the lights in the living room.

As they reached the veranda a man rose from a chair and came briskly walking to meet them. There was a military swing to his square shoulders and, though his hair was white, yet Manners judged he was not over fifty. He was startled by Carter's rushing past him to greet the man whom he introduced as a Wallace Moulton. Though Manners could not place the name, yet he had heard it somewhere. Then Carter requested that he be allowed to hold a private conversation with the visitor.

Excusing himself, Manners walked into the living room. The newspaper he picked up was dropped after a second. Taking his tobacco pouch from his pocket, he packed the pipe with the stringy English mixture which he loved. From the chair his eyes strayed over to the open window. He could see the outlined figures, hear the rumble of eager voices. He wondered who the man might be, and why George had been so keen to see him.

As he stretched out in the chair, he realized that he was weary. It was more of a mental tiredness than anything else, perfectly natural under the circumstances. From the very moment the storm had ended he had lived in a maze of events, which were not only mystifying, but which had come so swiftly that there had been little time for connected thought. As he blew a smoke ring toward the ceiling he decided that the time had come for some real thinking.

Several things puzzled him. Unless certain ques-

tions were answered, the murders would never be solved. Always in a murder case there was one question which must be answered before the case could be solved—Why? He thought of this for a while. In the end he concluded that Carter was correct when he said the two people had been killed in order to keep their tongues still. But silence purchased at the price of two murders showed that it was no trivial secret which had to be guarded. What was the secret?

The woman's visit to the minister had been the cause of the second murder. What had she told him during those thirty minutes she had been in the study? Something which had horrified the man. Perhaps the person she talked about was someone the clergyman knew very well—maybe a member of his own church. No ordinary failing, no little, petty sin, would cause him to say he had lost all faith in human nature. What was the something she told, which caused an individual to feel that even murder was better than having his secret known?

The woman's car had been discovered only a few hundred yards from his own driveway. She was coming toward the city at the time of her death. As the poison acted quickly, it stood to reason that somewhere within a mile of his own house had been the place she had visited. He ran over in his mind the names of the nearby owners of estates, then shook his head. Not one of them could be thought guilty of a murder, except possibly Hurd.

There was nothing about his neighbor that he liked, but, if his psychology was correct, the man would stoop

to the meanest and most uncharitable of acts—but would stop at murder. Hurd's type was rather common and filled the world with sorrow, a repressed individual, fanatical in all he did, who loved money more than he did comfort. That he should write seven letters to the chief was not surprising. People of his emotional unbalance were apt to do odd things. Yet as a rule they never committed murder. If they did, it would be a crime which had been long thought over. He felt very sure the death of the clergyman had come without any period of premeditation.

He tired of trying to find any solution to his mingled thoughts and glanced at the window. Carter and Moulton were still talking and, though the words could not be distinguished, the tones were serious. His hand fell on the drawer of the desk and from habit he pulled it open. An object within caused his hand to sweep into the drawer. As it came out he glanced at the object he held. It was a small rubber cap—the thing he had found on the floor of the car. Rogan had said it had been used as a cover for the head of the shifting rod. Rogan was wrong; it was too small to cover the head of the rod. Not only was it too small but it was not deep enough. Rogan's idea had seemed reasonable enough, but then the chief had never seen the rubber cap.

Examining it, he decided that it had not been used very long. The rubber was new and springy. It might have fitted over the top of a bottle but, so far as he knew, no one ever used rubber caps for bottles. As he turned it over and over in his hands he saw a little

hole in the center of the cap, a hole which had been punched by a sharp point. It puzzled him.

Leaning back in his chair he tried to figure out what the rubber had been used for. It had been found at the feet of the murdered woman, on the floor of her car. It must have been used somewhere about the machine. He thought of the instruments upon the dash. There seemed no place the cap could fit in. He was about to replace it in the desk when he gave a start, as he looked at it again. It could have fitted over the button of the horn. The car she had been driving had its horn button in the center of the steering wheel.

As he forced his fingers into the rubber he decided that that was where it had been used. Yet he was a little dubious. Who ever heard of covering that with a piece of rubber? Again his glance rested upon the small hole. If the rubber was over the button of the horn, that hole would be touched every time the driver slammed down their hand to sound a warning. As he thought this, he heard the chairs being pushed back on the veranda; knew they were coming into the house.

But Manners never heard them cross the floor of his living room. There was but one thought in his mind, only one thing in which he was interested. In his hand was a piece of black rubber, a rubber cap with a tiny hole through center. It might have cost ten cents, perhaps not so much, but as he looked at it he was confident of one thing. He knew, now, how the woman had met her death.

CHAPTER XIV

As he walked across the floor, Carter observed the sudden way in which Manners leaped from his chair. When he spoke, the object his friend had been looking at had been thrust into the drawer of the desk. There was an odd expression upon his face, triumph mingled with doubt. With a startled look in Carter's direction, Manners shook his head as he hastened into the hall. A moment later they heard his voice at the telephone.

He had rushed past the two surprised men with but one desire in his heart. Sitting before the telephone he tried to remember the name of the minister's secretary. It might be late, but he intended to reach her if possible. What was her name—Euhler—Ehyer—Ayre? That was it. And there were seven by that name in the book. He called four before the girl's voice came floating over the wire.

It was information he was after, information which only the secretary could give. Did the minister have any way by which he told his organist when to start playing? He was not surprised when the girl replied that there was a buzzer on the organ. The clergyman would press a button on his desk, and thus notify his organist that it was time to start the service. She would play for a while and, five minutes before he entered the pulpit, he would notify her again.

As he was told this, a smile passed over Manners'

face. So far the information had been what he expected, but, as he remembered that the secretary had not been in the city on the Sunday the minister died, he wondered if she could answer the next question. Had Dr. Wood pressed the button which rang the buzzer the morning of his death? He was told that it had been done. The organist had informed the girl that the first signal had been given—that she should start to play, but there had been no other. The buzzer had not sounded a warning that the clergyman was about to leave his study for the pulpit.

Thanking the girl he rang off. He knew that Carter was waiting in the living room, yet for a few moments he sat silent. Though he looked directly at a Rops etching, yet he never saw the weird picture. Instead he was thinking. If he was correct, he knew how the poison had been given to both the woman and the clergyman. The manner in which they had been killed had been so simple that its very simplicity had caused them to overlook it. And he had discovered another thing.

The minister always warned the organist that he was coming into the pulpit. First a signal would tell her that it was time to play. He would wait a few moments, then, just before he left the study, would warn her he was coming into the pulpit. She had received the first signal, but the second—that he was about to leave the study—had not been given. In the period between the signal to start the service and the time he should have given the other, he had been

poisoned. And Manners was confident he knew how the poison had been given.

There was no doubt in his mind that he was right. He knew how both people had been poisoned, though just how valuable this knowledge might be was another question. He remembered the classification of Gross—Where?-When?-How?-Why? They could answer the first three of the questions—perhaps now they were on the way to find an answer to the last. When they could, the case would be over, but as he went back to his guests, he knew that they were still a long way from the end of the mystery.

He received a searching glance from Carter as he came into the room, but did not answer it. He was trying to place the man who was sitting in his easiest chair. Something about the square shoulders, the manner in which he held himself upright, spoke of military service. The strong face hinted that the man was accustomed to give commands, commands which must be obeyed. There was strength in the stocky figure, a touch of power about the square jaw. As he reached for his pipe, he was wondering who the man might be.

"I ought to tell you," Carter laughed, "that Moulton is the head of the Government Narcotic Squad. He flew here this afternoon, after getting my message."

Not a muscle of Manners' face moved as he listened to the confession. He had heard of Moulton. Why Carter had brought him from Washington would have to be explained. The statement made clear the telegram, a telegram of such importance that the department

head, after receiving it, had flown four hundred miles. Though Manners' face showed no surprise, yet he was startled.

"You see Harley, Moulton thought my information was worth a personal trip."

The square-jawed man dropped his cigarette into an ash tray as he leaned forward in his chair. The voice which spoke was soft in tone, though there was an air of authority behind the words.

"Perhaps you may remember, Professor, reading about the million dollar drug seizure we made this spring in Buffalo?"

Though Manners had simply read the headlines, he remembered the circumstances. A man and a woman had been taken off a train and their trunk examined. The papers said a million dollars' worth of cocaine and opium had been found. At the time he thought the figures were rather large, not being interested, had read no more. He mentioned this, only to have Moulton nod, then continue:

"The story in the papers was correct. We did find a million dollars' worth of drugs in the trunk. And there is a story behind it."

He told them that the United States now led all the world in the illegal use of drugs. From a small, unimportant department of the government, the narcotic group had become one of the most overworked of the government agencies. The Buffalo arrests, though they were important, had accomplished little. True they had found a million dollars' worth of drugs, but that was only a drop in the bucket in the vast flood which

seeped into the country. People read a good deal about bootlegging; few realized the smuggling which was going on in drugs.

Vividly the work of the government men was pictured. Over all the borders the drugs came seeping through. From the ocean steamers came the cocaine from Switzerland, Germany and France. Opium came across the Mexican border and from the ships on the Pacific. Those who were dealing in the illegal commodities were always changing the place through which they smuggled their goods into the country. Then he told Manners something he did not know.

In the last two years, the government had discovered that drugs were coming over the Canadian borders. A wrecked car outside of Buffalo had contained fifty thousand dollars' worth of opium. A fishing boat, thought to be a rum runner, got on fire. When the coast guard rescued the crew, they found no liquor, though they did discover ten tins of opium, which had been overlooked when the cargo had been thrown into the lake. This led to action by the department.

Operators had discovered that both opium and cocaine were coming into the country somewhere between Chicago and Buffalo. A trunk with over a million dollars' worth of drugs in it had been taken off one of the best trains in the land. The man and woman who had checked the trunk went to prison, but after all they were small fry. So far they had been unable to discover who was behind the ring, or the exact locality where the drugs came in. It was then that Moulton smiled as he said:

"So I was interested in Carter's telegram."

"Harley," broke in Carter, "you remember the story the revenue man told us at the Customs house, about his arresting Mrs. Russell, thinking she was a rum runner or something. All he discovered in her boat was ten cases of English puddings and jams—stuff she had a right to bring across."

Manners nodded. When the story had been told, he had wondered why the woman should sail sixty miles for a few dollars' worth of tinned food. The face of the revenue man had amused him, because of its sheepish expression. He had at once forgotten the story, though it was evident that Carter thought it was of importance. He insisted that Carter should go into details.

"There was one thing about that woman which interested me," Carter went on. "She had left her husband, yet she seemed to have a good deal of money. Where did she get it? We were told that she was no one's mistress. Rogan insisted that she was not mixed up in bootlegging. Yet she had money. The question in my mind was, how did she get it? When we heard of her sailing to Canada every little while, I began to wonder why she made the trip."

He paused to light a cigarette. Blowing the smoke toward the open window he started to tell what had been on his mind. It was thirty miles across the lake, fifty to the nearest Canadian town. Why should a woman of the type of Marjorie Russell sail over that dangerous strip of water? Above all, why should she bring back ten cases of jam and that sort of stuff? No

one, he insisted, ever wanted ten cases of jam for personal use. As for getting it any cheaper, why, the gas used in sailing the boat would be more than the saving on the food.

"So you think?"

"I just wondered, that was all. If liquor was something the woman was not mixed up with—then it might be drugs. Tins of jam made me think of opium. It comes in little tins, you know. I knew Moulton's men were interested in this part of the country, so I sent him a line. Might not be the slightest thing in it, but if there was, we could see why someone might be afraid she would talk."

As he listened to the swift, eager voice, Manners realized that Carter might be presenting the motive behind the two murders. Rogan leaned toward the idea that the woman's husband was guilty. Some facts made this idea seem a reasonable conclusion. The husband could have secured the poison; he had quarreled with his wife, had been in the church while she was in the study. But there was one flaw in this theory. The husband might have murdered his wife, but there was no reason why he should have poisoned the minister. And then there was Hurd.

The scene of the previous evening flashed through his mind. Again he saw the nervous, trembling figure, heard the high, shrill voice which had shouted forth in angry rage. Rogan half believed that the merchant knew something about the crimes. The letters had contained a threat, had hinted at revenge. Both men could not be guilty. What was more, no theory they

had yet thought of fitted the case. This idea of Carter's might.

It was Carter's impression that the woman's trips across the lake had been for the purpose of bringing in drugs. No one would have any suspicion of her. Something caused her to fly to the minister and confess, the typical action of an angry, neurotic woman seeking revenge. She had betrayed the person she had acted for, betrayed him in a moment of rage. She had rushed from the study and, woman like, had gone to the person she had betrayed and taunted him with her action. To keep her still she had been killed and, because of what she had told the clergyman, he had been poisoned. That was his theory.

For over an hour the three men discussed this idea. Though there were no real facts to work upon, they reached a conclusion. The woman's trips across the lake had been for some illegal purpose. This would explain the fairly large amount of money she appeared to have. Liquor might have answered the question, but Rogan, who ought to know his rum runners, insisted that the woman was not guilty of running liquor. Only one thing was left, drugs; and they admitted that this was only a theory.

When Moulton rose to go, they had decided that the theory no doubt was correct; and, if it was, it would explain the murders. As they stood in the hall, Manners asked his guest to stay over night, but the official refused, saying that there was work to be done, half hinting that there were some of his operators to see, a confession which made Manners realize that,

whatever he might think of the theory, at least Moulton took it seriously.

When they were alone in the living room, Carter looked gravely at his friend. There was something on Manners' mind, and it had been there ever since he went to the telephone. Carter asked what it was.

"I know how those two were poisoned."

"So do I," came the drawling retort. "Curare."

"No, I mean I have found out the way it was done."

Carter gave a look at his friend. The face he saw was serious, with a trace of excitement in the eyes. For a second he studied him, then asked for an explanation. Instead of replying, Manners reached into the drawer of the desk and brought forth an object which he extended in his hand. As he took it, Carter saw that it was a black rubber cap.

"That's the weapon," he was told. "See the little hole in the center of the rubber. You remember Rogan thought this cap covered the end of the gear rod but, it's too small for that. It's my idea that it went over the button of the horn. The horn in that car was in the center of the steering wheel."

"You are not trying to tell me that this piece of rubber poisoned anyone," was the amused reply.

"Who said it did? Look at that hole. Suppose there was a needle thrust through that rubber cap. Suppose the needle was smeared with curare. Suppose the rubber cap was placed over the button of the horn. Don't you see what would happen?"

Turning the soft rubber in his hand, Carter studied

the innocent looking material. There was a small hole in the center, a hole made by some tiny object. As he thought what it might mean, he gave a shudder. He could picture the horn of that car. No one ever saw the button of his horn when he drove at night. She would be driving, and would slam down her palm upon the button. The point of the needle would cut through the flesh, the poison enter her blood. A few moments later she would die.

It was an unpleasant picture, but Manners agreed with him. The cap must have been placed over the button just before she drove from the house she had visited. One always sounded one's horn in going around a bend in the road, or when passing a car. The woman's hand had banged down upon the button, the needle had pierced her flesh. In the space of twenty minutes she would be dead. Manners said that in the morning he would take the rubber cap to a toxicologist, and it was his idea that it might show a trace of poison.

Placing the rubber cap back in the drawer, Carter nodded his agreement.

"But how about the minister?" he asked.

"The button on the desk."

At Carter's puzzled look, Manners told of his conversation over the telephone. The minister had sounded the buzzer as a signal for the organist to start playing. When his hand hit the button he was poisoned. They had been told that he entered the church about fifteen minutes to eleven; the buzzer had sounded at eleven. Up to that moment nothing had happened, but the buzzer had never sounded again, though it should have

announced that he was about to enter the pulpit. When he first pushed the button, to tell the organist that it was time to play, he had been poisoned.

There fell a silence in which Carter's hand reached over the desk for the rubber cap. Then, with a hasty motion, he drew his hand away with a shudder of disgust. He rose to his feet and cast a thoughtful look at Manners; then he spoke, and the tone was serious:

"It's after twelve, and we have had little sleep lately. You say the poison acts quickly, but are you sure there would be enough on the point of a needle to kill anyone?"

He was informed that the natives of South America used only a small amount on the points of their spears and arrows, but that slight amount was deadly to both human beings and animals. There was no doubt that if a person scratched his hand with a needle whose point had been smeared with curare, he would die.

"Well then, that's that," was the reply. "But you do not sound your horn unless you come round a curve or pass another car. Now there is a bend in the road not far from where you found her body. No doubt she was poisoned before she came to it. Let's forget it and go to bed."

As Carter turned to go to the hall, Manners rose slowly to his feet and stood gazing at the window, which he did not see. Carter had mentioned that there was a bend in the road not far from where the body had been found. That was true; there was a mile and a half of curving road beyond that spot. But there was another place where she might have sounded her

horn. Suppose she had been coming out of Hurd's driveway. She would have blown the horn before turning out onto the road. When she did, the needle would pierce her flesh. That would explain why the parked car, with her silent body behind the wheel, had been found a little over a hundred yards beyond the driveway.

CHAPTER XV

By accident, the missing book was found next morning. Manners discovered it in his bedroom closet, hidden under some soiled laundry. At the sight, he remembered throwing the soiled suit upon the closet floor. At the time the book must have dropped out of the pocket. In Carter's opinion the book explained the reason for the attempted robbery, but, after sinking down in the nearest chair, he was not so certain that it was of any importance.

It was three inches long, perhaps two wide. The back was leather, the sides board, covered with red paper. Both leather and paper showed signs of much use, and it was plain to see that the book was old. Across the back, in little gold letters was spelled out one word—THEMIDORE. Rather vaguely he remembered that a semi-erotic novel of that name had been published in France in the year 1785. Opening the book he discovered that the original text had been torn out, and a few sheets of note paper inserted.

Like all book lovers he had often raged at the use books of the past were being put to by certain shops. In London and Paris, he had seen books of the eighteenth century made into cigarette cases and boxes for perfume. The beautiful bindings had been kept, the printed pages destroyed. This little book had suffered

that fate. The erotic romance of a past day had been torn out, and only the cover had been kept.

The book had been used for a memorandum, yet there was very little writing upon the twenty or thirty pages. Only three had been used, and they simply contained a mass of figures. The figures were in two columns and on one page had been written the word, July. On this page, below the name of the month were the figures, 3-7-14. In the other column, opposite these numbers, was just the figure, 50.

Moving over to the open window he tried to comprehend what the figures meant. The right-hand column on each of the three pages was the same, but one page had the number 50 opposite the rows of figures, while on the other two, the numbers ran into the hundreds. It might be that the first column represented the day of the month, and as he thought this he noticed the number, 14. Today was the fourteenth of the month.

With a frown upon his brow, he glanced out of the window. It would be a warm, sultry day, for a slight fog was lying close to the ground. Not the slightest hint of a breeze came through the window, and he could not see more than a few yards over the lawn. Over by the garage he glimpsed the Airedale, on his way down to the shore. Though it was early, yet the sun behind the fog felt warm. Long before noon it would be a close, sticky morning.

He had placed the book upon the window sill but picked it up again. That it was of any importance he doubted. Carter's theory about the robbery now seemed

to be absurd. For a while he gazed at the little book. Over a hundred years ago it had been one of the popular light romances delighted French society. Someone had spent days designing the curious cover. Now it had been made into an account book.

How it had crossed the sea, and landed in the inland city, would have made an interesting story. The fad of using only the covers of old books, had started in Paris. They had been made into candy boxes, been used for everything from brandy to rouge. Never before in America had he seen one outside of New York. As he glanced again at the book, something about the cover caused him to look very closely.

Studying it a moment, he opened to the inside front cover. As his fingers passed over the paper, it yielded under the pressure. Rising he walked over to the dressing table and found a small knife. One thing about that cover struck him as being odd. The paper on the inside cover was different from that on the back, and seemed to be rather loosely fastened at each corner.

Running the edge of the knife blade along the corners of the paper, he found that it was easy to loosen. When the knife had passed under each edge, he was able to lift the paper without breaking it. Then he saw what he had suspected. There was a slight hollow between the paper and the board cover, a hollow containing two small sheets of paper, covered with fine writing.

A little excited, he studied the two sheets. Apparently the writing was a list of names, and in a number of cases, addresses were given. But if they were street

addresses, it was not possible to tell in what city they might be. The names were either the first name of individuals or else nicknames. After the street address were figures, which he decided represented sums of money. If they did, the amounts were large. The lists were important, for no one would have bothered to conceal them if they were of no value.

The sound of his bedroom door opening caused him to whirl around. Carter was coming into the room, a rather sleepy Carter, dressed in a vivid black and gold sleeping garment, whose eyes went, wondering, to the sheets of paper held in his friend's hand. The perplexed look upon Manners' face caused a languid question. When it was answered the sleepy expression vanished. His hand went out for the memoranda, and he eagerly scanned their contents. When he returned them, the look on his face was expressive. Picking up the book he looked for a second at the front cover, then turned to place it back on the dressing table.

"I want to take this in to Moulton after breakfast," he said. "I think you have found something big—just how important I am not ready to say. Let's get breakfast over and hurry into the town."

After the meal was over, Carter insisted that they both use their own machines. He hinted that he would be very busy all morning, and his manner showed that he wished to be alone. The suggestion pleased his friend. He also had an active morning before him, one in which he desired to be by himself. With the words that they would meet at lunch, they drove away in their own cars.

If anyone had followed Manners' blue roadster that morning, he would have found little chance to rest. It was seen in many parts of the city, though it never remained long in any one place. It first paused before the doors of the three leading drug stores, remaining at the curb while its owner dashed inside and asked a question. Then it went over to the granite church, before whose door it stayed for some time.

As he went up the steps of the church, Manners was pleased to discover that the door was open. The janitor was washing the floor and was perfectly willing that Manners should go to the study. Instead of going through the basement, he went into the auditorium, and, opening the door, passed into the church office.

As he dropped down into a chair his eager eyes went searching over the desk. What he was looking for was not on the desk, but he found it on the side of the oak leg, a button connected with a wire, the signal which ran to the organ. If he had been observed, it would have been noticed that he was very careful not to let his hand touch the button.

Getting down on his knees, he studied the object set into the leg of the desk. It protruded a little from the surface, and he gave a low whistle as he saw that the circle had been filed away. Instead of being a flat surface the button came to a sharp point. Anyone reaching over and banging his hand down upon this point, would have cut through the skin. And there was no doubt that the button had been filed to a point.

His hand went into his pocket for the screw driver he had placed there. There was a grave look on his

face. The minister had been sitting in his chair, perhaps looking over his sermon. He could see the man glance at his watch, picture his reaching over and bringing his hand down upon the button. It would sound the buzzer upon the organ, tell the organist that it was time to play. The motion would be fairly vigorous, and the sharp point would cut through his flesh, the point covered with curare.

As he unscrewed the button from the leg of the desk, he was careful not to touch it. Rolling it up in a paper, he placed it in a pocket. As he rose, he studied the room for a second. Over in the corner was the typewriter, and beside it stood the dictaphone with its rack for the rolls. As he glanced at the picture of the Christ upon the wall, he remembered what he had seen the first time he looked into the study. The thought was not pleasant, and he hurried to the street.

His next stop was in front of a three-story building only two blocks from the police station. On the second floor he paused before a door which bore the name of a doctor, and under it the word, toxicologist. The doctor was not in, but his keen-faced assistant heard Manners' request, replying that he could do what was required by noon time. When Manners' went back to the car, the piece of rubber and the button he had unscrewed from the desk were left behind.

His next stop was more or less an accident. As he passed in front of the city library, some instinct caused him to drive to the curb and stop. Considered architecturally, the building was far from being beautiful, and the museum was on the third and fourth floors, a

rather poorly arranged museum, he discovered, after entering the first room.

There had been no real reason for entering the museum, and he wandered aimlessly from room to room. The Indian curios were many, though not of very much importance. A collection of glassware failed to rouse the slightest spark of interest. When he left the first floor of the museum he paused doubtfully before the steps which led to the other sections. There was no reason to take the time to go to the other floor, but in the end he did.

The first room of the fourth floor was filled with case after case of stuffed birds. He walked through this collection to enter the other room. Here, for the first time, he discovered something which interested him, cases filled with articles collected by someone who had spent years in South America. They were curios mostly from the various republics of the isthmus. Gay colored birds, odd plants, skins of wild animals were all around him. Then something caused him to walk across the floor and stand silent before an exhibit upon the wall.

There was no pattern or arrangement used in displaying the objects he was looking at. The grass shields did not interest him. Grouped around them were a few bows with the arrows tied to the bow string. Five long reed spears held his gaze for a moment; then he glanced at the rods beside them. When he saw these, he gave a start. He was looking at one of the most dangerous weapons in the world, the blow pipes through which the natives of South America hunted

game with poisoned darts, darts whose points had been dipped in curare.

Just how long he looked at the blow pipes he did not know. The long reeds seemed harmless enough in their odd design against the dark burlap wall, just a few spears, a small collection of bows and arrows, and the long innocent looking rods, rods which he knew were not as innocent as they appeared. Once they had been among the most dangerous weapons the world possessed.

With a start he turned to rush out of the room, and hurried down to the other floor. He had noticed a small office, glimpsed through the open door a white haired woman sitting at a desk. No doubt she was the curator and could give him the information he was seeking. So impetuous was his haste that, when he came rushing through the office door, the woman at the desk half rose to her feet in startled surprise.

He mentioned his name and she recognized it. She expressed the hope that she could be of service. He mentioned the South American collection and was told that it had been given to the city many years ago. A medical missionary who had spent twenty years in the country had been the giver. Then came the next question. Had the giver of the collection, by any chance, given the museum any of the poison the natives used on the tips of their arrows? He was told that he had.

With a smile the woman rose to her feet and turned to a little cabinet which was upon the wall. A bunch of keys was taken from the desk, one was chosen and inserted in the lock. The door was opened, and a few

shelves filled with a mingled collection of small objects could be seen. Her hand went into the cabinet and came forth with a small box.

"Doctor Reed gave us this little box of curare," the woman said, "but because it is a poison we have never displayed it. Instead we put the little box inside this tin one. You are the second person who has asked lately to see it."

The expression upon Manners' face did not change at her remark. Someone had asked if the museum had a specimen of the poison. To discover if there was any in the cabinet, one would be forced to inquire. Someone had done so only a short time ago. A thrill passed over him as he asked the curator if he might see the contents of the box.

Instead of speaking, she simply extended her hand. Taking the box he saw that it was a wooden affair, with a rather tight cover. It was not heavy and whatever might be inside did not fill all the space. Tilting the box, he felt something move and pulling off the cover he looked within, giving a start of surprise at what he saw. The woman had said that the box contained a small amount of curare, placed in a tin box. But when he pulled off the cover, the box was empty. Instead of curare, it contained a small piece of lead.

Something in his face caused the woman to come close to his side. Her eyes went down to his hand as she looked into the wooden box. For a moment she seemed unable to speak; then a cry escaped from her lips:

"Why—why, it's not there!"

She turned a frightened face and their eyes met. The

look he received was a puzzled one, as if she was facing a situation beyond her understanding. Her hand reached out, a hand which trembled as she tried to see if her eyes had deceived her. Then she turned with a half sob.

"What shall I do? What shall I do? That is a very deadly poison, and it's gone."

To Manners, what had happened was very clear. Someone had stolen the box containing the curare and had substituted a piece of lead. She must know almost everyone in the city, no doubt could give the name of the individual who had asked if the South American collection had contained curare. Yet when the question was asked, he was disappointed to discover that she could give him no information.

It was the young lady who was her assistant who had shown the wooden box, and it happened to be her day off and she was in Buffalo. It would be six o'clock before she returned to the museum. All the curator could tell him was that the assistant had given her the information. She had mentioned a man who inquired if the museum had any curare. The girl had opened the cabinet and allowed the man to see the box.

What had happened seemed very simple. The man had probably chosen a time when the assistant was busy and could pay little attention to him. Getting the box into his own hands, he had replaced the poison by the bit of lead. The assistant had not looked inside the box when she replaced it; had assumed from its weight that the poison was inside.

There were many questions he would have liked to

ask the curator, but the frightened woman could give him no assistance. It was her impression that the box had been shown a little over a week ago. Who had inquired about it, she did not know; nor could she say whether her assistant knew the individual. Telling her that he would mention the matter to the police chief, he went back to his car.

After climbing into the seat he sat silent for a few moments. It was almost noon and the sidewalks were filled with a hurrying crowd of clerks. Cars went by every second, and directly above the library an airplane was hurrying toward Cleveland, the noon mail, no doubt, but five minutes ahead of its usual time. On every side was hurry and haste, but Manners saw none of it.

It had been a profitable morning, just how profitable remained to be seen. There was no doubt that he had stumbled upon the manner in which the murderer had secured the curare. He smiled at the absurdity of life. Years ago a man had thought that he was doing the will of God by going to South America as a missionary. On his return, years later, his curios had been given to the museum. Just what good his twenty years of self-denial in South America had accomplished, Manners could not tell, but the direct result had been the stealing of the box of poison, and the death of two persons.

A shrill whistle telling that it was noon roused him. Throwing on the power, he crept out into the traffic and drove five blocks. Stopping in front of the laboratory he sprang out of the car and ran up the stairs which led to the office. Behind a desk he found

the young toxicologist, who, when he observed his visitor, reached out his hand for two reports, which he gave to Manners.

Both the rubber cap and the button from the desk had shown traces of curare. In the case of the rubber cap there was but a slight trace of the poison, and it had been found around the small hole. Evidently the curare had come from a sharp object which had been thrust through the rubber. The button however, though its point appeared to have been wiped off, revealed several smears of the poison. These findings had gone into the reports.

The toxicologist was keen to know why he had been asked to make his report, but Manners did not care to take any one into his confidence. Paying the small fee, he thanked the man and went back to his car. This time he headed for the police station. He had real news to tell Rogan, and he wondered how the chief would receive it. In his own mind he was sure of one thing—he knew how both persons had been killed.

When he pushed open the door of Rogan's office and gazed into the smoky room, he saw that the chief had a visitor. The well dressed man whose back was toward the door turned as Manners entered, and halted the flow of words which had been coming from his lips. As Manners walked across the floor, he jumped to his feet and came part way to greet him. It was a soft, well kept hand which was thrust forth, though its strength rather surprised Manners.

"I have intended coming to see you, Professor. In a sense we are neighbors. I just ran into the station to

see how the chief is getting along. You know I offered a thousand dollars reward for the discovery of Doctor Wood's murderer."

As the hurrying, high-pitched voice ceased for a moment, Manners dropped down into a chair and looked at the speaker. Freeman was a broker, evidently a man of means. The suit had been cut by a high-priced tailor; the dark brown tie looked as though it had been imported. There was nothing unusual about the man, though he did appear to like the sound of his own voice. The round face was as smooth as a child's, and the dark blue eyes which glanced over the room had an innocent look.

"I want the cops to earn that reward," the high voice chuckled. "Told the chief I was going away for a while, but that I would fix it up with the bank so he could get the reward—" He paused to give a wicked laugh—"that is if they earn it."

Manners was tired, and something about the rambling voice got on his nerves. If Rogan did not get the man out of the office he would talk for an hour. Speech flowed from him, like water off a roof. Harmless enough type, liking the good things of life and a place in the limelight. Yet he had been nervous and frightened the day of the inquest. There had been a lot of emotion in his voice when he had rushed into the office and offered the reward of a thousand. Wonder why he wanted to part with his money.

With a start Manners realized that the man was still talking and had addressed him. He wanted to know if Manners had any conclusions regarding the crimes.

A famous professor like himself ought to have some theory. But Manners informed him that he did not have the slightest opinion upon anything, an answer which caused the smooth face to become thoughtful. Then it broke into a grin. Taking a gold cigarette case from his pocket, Freeman extended it to them all and was refused. He rose to his feet and started across the floor. By the door he paused.

"Remember, chief," he called back, "there is a thousand dollars waiting in the bank. All you have to do is go and get it." Then the door slammed.

As the sound died away, Rogan suddenly swore. Remarking something about darned fools, he turned in his chair to look at his friend. Something upon the serious face caused the chief's eyes to grow large. He was reaching for a stogie when he asked.

"What have you been doing all morning, Harley?"

Manners took his time in replying. He watched the chief light a long brown stogie, saw him lean back in his old chair. He knew that what he was going to say would cause the stogie to be slammed down on the desk, pictured the startled expression which would sweep over the round, kindly face, but because he wished to prolong his moment of triumph, he did not reply for several minutes. When he did speak his voice was grave:

"Why all I have done this morning Rogan, is to discover and prove how those two were killed, proved it beyond the shadow of a doubt."

CHAPTER XVI

THOUGH he would never have admitted it, deep down in his heart Rogan had a very warm spot for his gloomy, dingy office. Some day there would be a new building for the police force. When that day came, perhaps the only one in the department who would be sorry to leave the crowded basement would be the chief. The chair behind his battered desk had been the throne from which he had listened to all sorts of stories. Tragedy and comedy had played around the desk, and very few had been the stories which had astonished him.

But the calm admission of his friend had startled the chief. With all his heart he hoped it was true—yet he had grave doubts. The last few days had not been very pleasant. In all his years of police work, he had never before faced a case in which clues were so few. He knew that his own future depended upon the solution of the crimes. When he had become police chief, there had been a great deal of angry comment from the political machines. His backers had said much regarding his long years of experience. Now that he faced the most serious case of his career, experience counted, it seemed, for little.

His detective force consisted of three men—and not very well trained men at the best. They had done all they could but, deep down in his heart, he realized

that they had uncovered little. He might have his suspicion as to who had committed the murders, but there was not enough evidence to take the case to the grand jury. The woman's husband was locked in a cell; he would have to release him in a few hours.

That Manners' statement, that he knew how the murders had been committed, was correct, Rogan doubted. The police had failed, and it did not seem possible that the young man who sat across from him could have done any better. Yet, as he cast a look at the serious face, he began to wonder. He saw several sheets of paper taken from a pocket, watched a package being unwrapped. Just what the rubber cap and the black push button could mean he did not know.

As he shoved the two articles across the desk, Manners told what he had discovered. The voice was unhurried, its tone unemotional, yet somehow Rogan thought that the professor was excited. He listened as if not believing what he heard; then his hand shot out for the two objects. It was true; in the center of the rubber cap there could be seen a small hole, and he noticed the sharp edge upon the push button. Silently he reached out for the reports, solemnly studied them. When he raised his eyes it was to ask a question:

"What do you think was behind the murders?"

"Fear. Of course there are several possibilities—jealousy, revenge, fear. We rule out jealousy, because of the death of the minister; and revenge hardly seems to fit in. Fear is left, and by fear I mean the dread of the murderer that the minister and the woman had it in their power to ruin him by what they might say."

The chief nodded. There seemed little doubt that Manners had discovered how the poison had been given. He had been told that fear was the motive behind the crimes. He thought of the man locked in the jail. His voice was uneasy as he said:

"Harley, Jack Russell don't seem to fit into your picture. What would he be afraid of?"

He was reminded that the husband would fear his wife might leave him. Manners admitted that jealousy, mingled with fear, might have caused him to kill the man he thought his wife was in love with. But the minister had been murdered, and they could not think that Russell had believed the clergyman was his rival. A sudden impulsive rage might cause the husband to kill his wife on the spur of the moment, but Manners shrugged his shoulders as he said that he was unable to fit the husband into the crime. If there was one fact which appeared clearer than any other, it was that the motive of the crimes had been fear of exposure.

With a gloomy expression upon his round face, Rogan had listened. When Manners ended, he reached for a paper which lay upon the desk. Soberly he studied the report of the toxicologist and what he read failed to please him. A question from Manners only increased his depression. The professor wanted to know what real evidence he had against the woman's husband. He said there was none. The facts discovered by his detectives amounted to little. Russell was a high-strung neurotic, who had married the wrong woman. Their quarrels appeared to have been of little account, even if she had left him. A week before her

death some agreement to live together had been made, but she had changed her mind upon this, the day of her murder.

"How did he know she was going to the church?"

"Russell says that when, Saturday evening, she called him on the phone, he just went crazy, pulled off his white coat and rushed over to her boarding house. The landlady told him she had heard his wife call the church and make an appointment. He went there, found she was in the study, waited fifteen minutes and went out. He had calmed down a little and decided he would not speak to his wife."

"So he claims he never saw her."

"That's what he says. He walked the streets a while, then went in a key club and filled up on booze. I checked that up, and he did. He says he never saw her again, does not know where she went after leaving the church. If he had not been a druggist, had not had that blowout with his wife, I suppose we never would have thought of locking him up. It took him two days to sleep off the drunk he got, and that was why we could not locate him."

Looking at his watch, Manners agreed with the chief. There was no real evidence against the woman's husband, and somehow he had an idea that the man had told the truth. That he could be guilty of the murders seemed a little absurd. Who had committed them, they did not know. But there was an uneasy feeling in his mind. It had been with him all morning, hinting and warning that they were close to a discovery.

"That reminds me," said Rogan, "Carter called and

said he won't be able to have lunch with you. Will see you at your house around five."

As he rose to leave, Manners almost told the chief about Moulton's visit, and also of his finding the notebook, but a glance at his watch had shown that it was after one. If he ever started that story it would be over an hour before he could get away. He decided to let Carter break the news when he was ready. Saying good-by, he went out to the street. On the sidewalk he hesitated about where to lunch, deciding at last to go to the leading hotel.

He lingered at his table long after the meal had ended. An idea was beginning to form in his mind, and it threatened to drive all other thoughts away. It was an idea with very few facts behind it. When he at last went from the hotel, he drove at once to his own house. Reaching his driveway, he stopped just inside the hedge, but he did not go into the house. Instead he walked down the road.

At the place where they had found the woman's car, he stopped. Beyond this spot she had been unable to drive. Here she had thrown her clutch into neutral, but had not turned off the gas. Here she had died. After the poison had entered her blood, she might have lived twenty minutes, though fifteen was the usual limit; but from the time the needle had pierced her flesh and the moment she had first felt the effects of the poison, not more than three minutes could have gone by.

He glanced down the road. To his right was the high hedge which enclosed Hurd's estate. Across the road,

other hedges continued for over a mile. Not two hundred and fifty yards in front of him, the road vanished around a sharp curve. He studied this for a while, his face very thoughtful. Then his eyes went searching to the driveway which led to Hurd's house. It was not more than two hundred yards from where he was standing, and he could see the tall elms which flanked each side.

A hundred and fifty yards from where he was standing, the woman's car had started to leave the road. That must have been the place where she had first felt the poison. If this was correct she must have received it only two or three minutes before. When she slammed her hand down upon the horn, the point of the needle had entered her flesh, and before she came around the bend in the road, she would of course sound the horn.

Walking down the concrete he paused at the place where they had seen the tire mark in the shoulder of the road. Here the car had wandered off the concrete only to come back again a few feet farther on. He could picture what had happened. The rain had ended, but the night was dark and gloomy. As the woman came to the bend in the road she would sound her horn before taking the curve. It was then the needle pierced her flesh. As he thought this, he gave a long slow whistle, and started to run.

At the driveway he stopped. His eyes took in the two rows of trees, noticed also the high grass in the field. A disquieting thought had come to him. Only a few yards from where he was standing the road swept away in a wide curve, but in the next mile and a half

of road there were at least a dozen dangerous curves. If she had driven over them, she would have been forced to sound her horn many times. What was more, the machine would have stopped long before reaching the spot where they had found it.

Suppose she had never driven over that mile and a half of road? Suppose she had come out of the driveway? Before turning out onto the dark road she would have sounded the horn. What was most important, this made the time limit check. Long before she came out of the driveway she would have sounded her horn. The sharp prick of the needle would have caused her to give a start. Perhaps it was this gesture which had knocked the rubber cap from the horn button.

But this theory meant that she had been visiting Hurd. He was not even sure of this. Twenty feet down the driveway was an opening through the trees. Here a road twisted its way to another house. Though he had never been in this house, he knew to whom it belonged. Tommy Freeman, like Hurd, knew the murdered woman.

How long he stood in the driveway, he never knew. With a sudden start, he at last whirled around and hurried back toward his own house. He had discovered something; just what it might lead to he did not know. As he hastened down the road, a hundred questions were playing through his mind. He hoped Carter would be at the house; he wanted to confide in someone.

Freeman and Hurd had known the woman. In fact she had worked for them both. When he had noticed the driveway, his first impression had been that the

woman was driving from Hurd's. This might not be so. It was just as logical to assume that she had been coming from Freeman's, perhaps more logical.

The murderer had feared exposure. The woman could not have known anything about Hurd which would have caused that neurotic individual to be afraid of her. Hurd would never have committed a murder. Freeman he knew nothing about. He had heard the man's voice ring out in the court room, had listened while he joked about the thousand dollar reward. People did not offer rewards for the discovery of crimes they had committed themselves.

Reaching his piazza he sank down into the nearest chair. The dog came over to his side, only to be pushed away. He wished if possible to get his thoughts into shape. The more he had tried to think, the more confused he had become. Think he must, if it was only to try to discover the hidden thought which had escaped him all day.

The woman could not have driven that mile and a half of curving road, and have been discovered where they had found her. She must have come out of the driveway, from either Hurd's or Freeman's. Freeman had been so disturbed at the inquest that he had shouted out. Also he had offered a reward. This seemed a very odd thing. He had seen the man twice. Somehow the rather weak, round face made it impossible for him to picture Freeman as a churchman. He had lived in the city only five years, he might not even know the clergyman. Perhaps the reward had been caused by a fear—but what fear?

Fear was the thing which had caused the crimes. Yet what could a wealthy man like Freeman be afraid of? No matter what the woman might have said, his word would be better than hers. There seemed no reason at all that Freeman could have been afraid of anything the minister might know. Somehow Freeman did not seem to fit in at all. Or else his theories were wrong.

Whoever placed the pointed button on the clergyman's desk, did so when there was no one in the study. The minister would have locked the door when he left, and there would have been no way of getting into the building. The janitor said that he had opened the church at ten and then had gone home. But between the hour of ten and eleven there would have been time for someone to go to the study. Whoever had replaced the button, knew the study very well.

What was the name of the man who had been so startled by discovering that he had arrived at church twenty minutes before service? He had said that he saw no one come out of the study. But habit was a queer thing. If a stranger had come through the study door, the man would have noticed it. If it had been someone he saw at church every Sunday, he might have forgotten the incident. He remembered that he had not been asked at the inquest if there had been anyone in the church when he arrived.

Going into the house he spent some time with the telephone book. When the receiver had been replaced he was more puzzled than ever. The man who had arrived at church twenty minutes too soon had been reached. He was positive no one had come through the

study door, but there had been two individuals in the building when he arrived, men who, like himself, had discovered that their watches were fast. One of the names caused Manners to smile; the other he had never heard. But Freeman had not been in the church, and the man told him he doubted if he had ever been in the building.

As he went back into the living room, a phrase which he had once read leaped into his mind: "In crime, one must always beware of coincidence." There were several coincidences in this affair. No one had thought of them, for after all they were simple things. As he thought this, a grave doubt began to sweep over him. In the bookcase he found a medical dictionary and took it over to a chair. After reading two articles he felt sure of one thing at least.

Three or four minutes after the poison entered her blood, the woman would have been incapable of movement. Though curare killed by asphyxia, yet its first result would be paralysis. It would be felt first in her toes. No, she never could have driven that mile and a half of winding road. She must have come out of the driveway. There were several coincidences in the case, and one must be explained. Thinking this, he went to the telephone and called the police station. To the answering voice he gave his name, requesting that the chief come to his house as soon as possible.

It was almost five when Carter drove into the yard. On the seat beside him sat Rogan. The chief was as gloomy as ever, but there was a curious air of lightness upon Carter's face. He came up the steps with a rush,

flung his hat into a chair, then tried to turn the big dog over on his back. When the attempt had failed, he took a chair, and gave his friend a long thoughtful glance.

Something was on Carter's mind, but Manners was in no mood to listen. In a few vivid sentences he poured forth his discoveries, told of the analysis made of the rubber cap and the push button, explained why he thought the woman had driven out of Hurd's driveway. Rather technical were the figures he used, all aiming to prove that she must have received the poison only a few hundred yards from where she had been discovered. When he ended, it was Rogan who spoke, and to Manners' surprise he did not comment upon what had been said.

"They took that bird Hurd away this afternoon. He just went blooy in his office, raved that he was being persecuted, that he had a mission and all that yap. Just broke all to smash."

It was not unexpected news. Ever since the outburst of yesterday, it had been Manners' impression that Hurd was very close to a breakdown. Years of broodings and repressions had been paid for. He made no comment, though he knew it would be a long time before the man would be restored to health—perhaps he never would regain it. He started to speak, only to have Carter get in ahead of him. What he said was as surprising as had been the chief's remark.

"So you want to discover, Harley, if the woman went to Freeman's that night? It will be easy to find out. Just at this minute he is away, but there is a great

big colored man over there. I have an idea that if Rogan drops in to see that black boy, the gold buttons will make him talk, that is, if Rogan threatens to get nasty."

There came a grunt from the chief as he rose from his chair. Carter's offer to run him over to the house was refused. The walk, he said, would do him good, and as he started down the steps he growled out that he wanted no company. There was a determined swing to his shoulders as he walked down the driveway. When the blue coated figure had vanished from sight, Manners turned to the careless young man seated opposite.

Two rather remarkable statements had fallen from Carter's lips. He had said that Freeman was away, and that he had a colored man. How he had managed to discover these facts, and why should he be interested in Freeman? The question caused a grin to pass over Carter's face and before he spoke he lighted a very long cigarette. He watched the first smoke ring float out over the yard, then he said:

"How do I know, Harley? Remember the story of Mrs. Wallace being pinched with cases of jam, pinched in Freeman's boat. We started right there this morning and in the course of the day have picked up a good deal of information about your neighbor. He came here from New Orleans, and was mixed up in a big bootlegging ring there. When it was smashed, he thought the city might be a bit too warm for comfort, so he got as far away as he could. We have nothing on the gentleman, so far as the murders are concerned, but we

do know that he went to Canada this afternoon in that white boat of his. He will be back tonight."

"If he went in that old tub," came the retort, "he won't be back today. Did you ever see it?"

Carter rose slowly to his feet and yawned. There was a little amused twinkle in his eye as he looked down at his friend. His voice was ironical when he replied:

"Maybe. It's been looked at. That old tub, as you call it, is a very interesting boat. It has twin liberty engines, and can do about sixty an hour."

CHAPTER XVII

THE silky edge under the low spoken words caused Manners to surmise that there was a great deal more which Carter might tell. He was a little disgusted with himself; he should have remembered that the government authorities had seized Freeman's boat, while the woman was sailing it. That one fact should have made him suspicious. As he thought this, Carter lighted a cigarette then spoke again.

"You see, Harley," he explained, "Moulton is not only the big boy in the narcotic crowd, but that means that he stands pretty close to all the police departments of the government. I know that a while ago he got it into his head that the drug ring was bringing in their stuff from Canada. The big seizure, two trunks taken off the best train in the country, was closer to two million than it was one. That only made him more positive than ever that he was right. The men he threw along the lakes did prove one thing. There is a dope ring, Harley," he said, leaning forward in his chair. "Odd to say, the bootleggers and the dope crowd very rarely come into conflict. Moulton's men found plenty of evidence to prove that liquor was being run into all the lake cities. Of course, whenever they do get any-one, it's always the little boy who takes the rap. The big ones are never touched. That's one reason I wondered about Freeman."

Manners was interested in knowing how they had discovered that Freeman was not merely a small city broker. During the night, Carter explained, suspicious over the woman's use of the boat, Moulton had sent an operator to get into Freeman's boathouse. He reported that, instead of being a slow old tub, it had twin liberty engines. A careful description had been sent to Washington, and from one of the departments came back the information that Freeman might be the New Orleans lawyer who had been mixed up in a big bootlegging ring, and who had moved from the city five years ago. A picture, which was in the files of the Department of Justice, had been sent over the wire. By noon, Moulton was certain of the man's identity.

Carter laughed as he said that, if Moulton had gone direct to Freeman, he might have been spared all his trouble, for he had not changed his name, and was making no attempt to hide. Because the bootlegging game had become too hectic, he had simply moved as far away as he could. It was Carter's impression that Freeman had noticed that the two criminal rings of his city were killing each other off just a little too fast for comfort. To avoid trouble, he had taken his money, and left the city.

As he became silent, Manners ran over in his mind the information he had received. He knew that Freeman had lived a very simple life in Westland. No doubt the broker's office had been more or less of a blind. But then there was the boat. He had seen it himself, tied to the wharf of the man's boathouse, an old tub of a boat, it had appeared to his unsuspecting glance. He

said as much to Carter, only to have his friend laugh.

"There are two boats. Strange to say they look alike. One is tied to the wharf, the other is inside the boathouse. Anyone seeing Freeman knocking about the lake in his old tub, at about six miles an hour, would be surprised to be told that the other, which was almost the same in looks, could go sixty. That means Canada in a little under an hour. Moulton is very much interested in the fact that the boats are alike, and is rather keen over the one with the twin liberties."

"So he has been up to something."

"Evidently. After listening to the stories Moulton's men brought in, and your account that the woman was poisoned as she came out of the driveway, I feel that he has been up to something. He went across the lake about three, and we don't think he will be back until around midnight. Then we will surprise him."

"Surprise him?" Manners queried, as Carter rose to his feet and went over to sit on the railing.

"Yes. We are going to give him a surprise party. Our hope that he will land at his boathouse does not mean that we will be able to prove him a murderer. But there are a few questions he ought to answer. Your idea about where the woman first received the poison is good work, Harley. We intended to inform you that there were questions he must answer; but you beat us to it. We want to know all about his friendship for the departed blonde."

The facts were starting to fall into place. Manners could not but wonder why it was that a man who had won a secure position in the city should have been

unable to leave well enough alone. Moulton no doubt felt certain that Freeman was smuggling either drugs or liquor. Carter was of the opinion that the woman had been used as a blind. No doubt this was the knowledge the murderer had feared would leak out. But he could not understand why a man who had all the money he needed should go into another criminal racket. He said as much.

"Oh many things. You know, far better than I, that many people go into that sort of a thing because they get an emotional kick. People who break the law very rarely go straight. It's a sort of a habit."

With a sudden start, Manners leaped to his feet. Habit, the last word uttered by the drawling figure upon the rail, had caused the long suppressed idea to leap from his sub-conscious mind. For two days he had been trying to remember a forgotten something, to start a train of association in his mind. He had tried to force his thoughts, but the idea would not come. Again and again he thought the association was about to break forth, only to discover that it would not. But now he knew what it was that had been troubling him.

When people reached a certain age they would react to a situation according to the habit patterns they had formed in life. He had failed to ask the one question which might throw light upon the minister's death. What had the clergyman done after the woman had left the study? There was only one manner in which he could answer that question. What would be the usual thing for the minister to do? What did he always do before leaving his study?

A quick glance at his watch showed that it was almost five. Starting for the steps he called out to Carter. Would he tell the housekeeper to have dinner by seven, also ask Rogan to eat with them? He was followed by amazed eyes down the drive, and, when Carter saw Manners leap into his blue roadster, he jumped down from the railing to call out a question. He wanted to know where Manners was going. The question was not answered, and, with an astonished face, Carter watched the car roll rapidly out of the driveway.

It was the fastest ride Manners had ever taken to the city. Ten minutes after leaving the house he was pulling up to the curb in front of the church. As he came tumbling out of the machine he noticed that the windows were open in the building. The janitor had mentioned that he would be in the church until five, and it lacked but two minutes of the hour. The door was open and he hastened directly to the study.

The room had not been disturbed since his morning visit. Then he had pushed the chair away from the desk, and it stood just where he had placed it. There was nothing out of place on the desk, and the dictaphone still flanked the typewriting stand. Sitting down in the chair, he carefully studied the room, his eyes taking in every inch of the study.

The minister must have sat in the chair while the woman talked. The story he heard caused him to say that his faith in humanity had been shaken. There was but one conclusion to be drawn from that remark. She had told a story which touched someone he knew, evidently a person for whom he had always had the great-

est respect. The individual could not have been Freeman. To Manners, that appeared impossible. The best clergyman of the city could hardly have been on close terms with the non-churchgoing broker.

Who was the person whose name, when mentioned, caused the minister to feel that he could never trust anyone again? Not only did Manners not know, but he did not have the slightest idea who it could be. He had rushed to the church because of an idea which had swept over him. Like everyone else, the minister's life was ordered by his habit patterns. What would he have done after the woman left the study? Manners thought he knew.

The secretary had been asked to come to the office, but, because the story he heard disturbed him, the minister had sent her away. What did he do after she left? What would he ordinarily have done? The dictaphone in the corner gave the hint. No doubt he had dictated a letter—perhaps several. In the wire basket were several rolls. One by one Manners placed them in the machine, and heard it talk out the dictation. When he had heard them all, he sat back in the chair, and a look of doubt swept over his face. There was not a thing upon any of the records that gave any hint as to whom the woman had mentioned.

His eyes fell upon the surface of the desk. Though a hymn book stood in one corner, its surface was almost bare. The sermon manuscript had vanished, as had also a large desk memorandum. As he noticed this, Manners pulled the chair close to the desk and began to pull out the drawers. The first one he opened gave the thing he

was seeking, the memorandum pad which had stood on the minister's desk that Saturday night.

The page which met his eyes bore a date, and the date was of the day before the clergyman died. Across the white paper had been scribbled odd little designs, designs without form or reason. He knew what they were—those unconscious figures which people draw with a pencil when they are ill at ease. But there was something else upon the page. A name had been written three times. And one thing about this name was suggestive. A line had been drawn through it, a heavy black line, as if the writer was trying to blot out what he had written.

It was not difficult to explain the sheet of paper. While the angry woman poured out her rage, the minister had been sitting at the desk. As she talked, he had picked up a pencil and, without knowing what he was doing, had drawn the odd designs upon the pad. Not only had he drawn the designs, but when she had first spit out a name he had written it down. Later, when he realized what he had done, he had crossed out the name, a sub-conscious action, expressing a wish to blot out the memory of the name from his mind.

Soberly he sat looking down at the surface of the desk. Below his eyes was the pad, with the page filled with crossed and curving lines. In the middle of the sheet a name had been written twice, and was repeated at the bottom of the page, a name with a heavy black line scored through the letters. Though the man whose name was written down was not a friend, Manners did know who he was, and the name so startled him

that for a moment the theory in his mind vanished.

But he knew his theory was correct, the only one which threw any light upon the murders. Only a man who was unconscious of his actions would have drawn the designs upon the pad. No doubt the very first time the woman had mentioned the name it had been written down. In Manners' opinion, this name told who had committed the murders. To prove this might be impossible. There was not a single bit of evidence which would stand for a moment in any court.

There came the thought that, after all, it might be far better to leave the thing in the hands of the police. In a sense, it was none of his affair; even if, in the end, the case should be written down as a failure. Then he thought of Rogan. The case must be solved or else the chief would lose his position. And no matter how he might feel, the crimes had been committed—murders in which the criminal had struck without sign or warning.

There was but one thing to do, no matter how disagreeable the task might be. Legal proof he had none. All the man he had in mind needed to do was keep still. If he did, there was not much chance of his getting into trouble. Could Manners make him speak, cause him to confess? As his eyes took in the room, they paused at the sight of the dictaphone. Then for almost an hour he sat thinking.

It was just six when he rose to go. The memorandum book had been placed in a pocket, and, besides, there was a dictaphone record. At the door he paused, remembering that the assistant curator of the museum

would now be back at her desk. Perhaps she had remembered the name of the person who had asked to see the box of poison. When he made the connection, he was forced to wait several minutes, but her answer did not surprise him. The girl remembered to whom she had showed the curare.

While he drove back to the house he thought over the fact which troubled him. The girl remembered to whom she had showed the poison, and the name had been the one he expected to hear, but she assured him the box had not left her hands, that she had placed it back in the closet and turned the key. He decided that the fact meant little. He had seen the cabinet, a cheap, insecure wooden thing; and if anyone wished to open it, he would have little trouble.

Both Carter and the chief were upon the porch as Manners drove into the yard. Their conversation had been so animated that they failed to notice him until the car was directly below them. As Carter turned, he gave one astonished look at his friend, motioning for him to come at once to the veranda. Before Manners even reached their side Rogan plunged into speech.

His visit to Freeman's had proved a success. There was no one at the house but a colored servant. The chief perhaps enlarged upon the man's size, but it was apparent that he was a very huge negro. Evidently he had been frightened by the brass buttons for, when he had been threatened with arrest, he had been willing to talk. Their guess had been correct, the woman had been at Freeman's house the night she was murdered.

While his master was at dinner, the doorbell rang.

As the servant opened the door, the woman rushed past him and ran into the dining room. There she had broken forth in an angry tirade, telling Freeman that she had told all about him. There was a guest at dinner, and his employer had risen and managed to get the infuriated woman to go into his library. For thirty minutes her angry voice floated from behind the closed door. Then the servant was summoned to the room. As he opened the door, he saw the woman snatch up a red book from the desk; then, turning, she rushed past him and out of the house.

The hurried voice paused for a second, and Carter rose to his feet. He stood looking down at the two men. A smile crossed his face and there was an ironical tone in his voice as he said:

"In other words, Harley, she was far from what you call a lovely lady, very far from it. But do not become too excited. I am going to wash for dinner. While I am away Rogan will give you all the details, and among them is the fact that Freeman never left the house during her call. So that seems to let him out, so far as being the person who put the cap on the horn."

Manners' tongue almost betrayed him. For a second he was on the verge of telling his smiling friend of the theory in his mind, but he kept back the revelation for two reasons. The theory might turn out to be unfounded, and, if it were correct, he would enjoy seeing Carter's face. He had been joked with a good many times, over his interest in crime, so he did not speak, and watched the calm young man stroll very slowly into the house.

Rogan had a good deal more that he must tell. In an increasing stream of words poured from his lips. Manners could see that the colored man had been badly frightened. With a grin the chief mentioned that he had threatened to take the colored man to the station, had even hinted at such things as twenty years and life. Under these threats the man had told all he knew—and he had known a good deal.

During the two weeks before her death there had been other quarrels. On the day she died, she had called the house around five o'clock. The servant had answered the phone and recognized her voice. What the conversation had been over, he did not know, but he had heard Freeman shout, "No!" into the telephone. He admitted that the two had been on good terms for many months, and that his master often allowed her to use his boat, but a week before she died he had been told that, if she ever came to the house again, he was to refuse to allow her to enter.

As he listened to the excited police chief, Manners realized that Rogan was beginning to think that Freeman was the murderer. Though there were a few uneasy hours ahead of his neighbor, he doubted if there was anything else. The reward he had offered now appeared to have been a gesture thrown out to the world. Carter had said that the man had not left his house during the woman's call, and someone must have placed the rubber with its poisoned needle over the horn of the car. This had been done while the woman was in the library.

When he was able to get in a word, he drew his chair

close to that of the chief and in a low voice, started to talk. From a pocket he took out the memorandum book, placing it on Rogan's knee. His finger pointed out the absurd designs and came to a rest upon a name. Then he explained what he thought the sheet of paper revealed. His visit to the museum was mentioned, the stolen curare spoken of. The sincerity in his voice troubled the chief.

As the grave voice went on, the chief's face grew more and more uneasy. He had given one quick, startled look at the name written upon the pad, only to come to the conclusion that the professor had suddenly lost his senses. What Manners was hinting was, of course, absurd. But as the low voice went on he began to be troubled. The theory might seem far-fetched, but Manners was presenting the first real facts that had come to light.

"It all sounds crazy to me," he protested. "What do you want me to do?"

There was but one thing to do. Manners realized that only by a trick could the murderer be forced to confess. Bending forward he talked long and seriously. The expressions which swept over Rogan's face, were pictures of conflicting emotions. Then, when Carter's voice came floating from the doorway, the chief slowly rose to his feet. For a moment he studied the professor, his face filled with doubt. Then he shook his head.

"All right we will try it," he said. "God knows you may get me in an awful mess. But I am in one now. This morning the commissioner was hinting that unless

I solved the affair I would be out of a job. We will try it out."

The dinner was long, mostly because Carter felt like talking. To Manners' great surprise he even mentioned his own work. A Senator, very much in the public eye, had been sent to Europe on a government mission. It had been Carter's bad luck to be chosen to go along and see that he kept out of trouble. The picture of the uncultured politician who never before had been out of his own country, and his attempts to censor the social and moral life of Europe, was one of the most laughable stories Manners had ever heard. Even Rogan, uneasy as he was, laughed again and again.

After dinner they went out on the porch to smoke. Twilight had ended, and it gave promise of being a very dark night. To see the lake was impossible, for the darkness enfolded everything in its embrace. There were no stars in the sky, and the thick, heavy clouds seemed closer to the earth than usual. Far away an owl was hooting, the dismal cry floating across the fields to their ears.

Manners knew that plans had been made to capture Freeman when he returned from Canada in his boat. It must be close to the time when they expected him to land, for Rogan kept glancing at his watch. He would not talk and, with a stogie stuck in the corner of his lips, he studied the dark lawn. It was just ten o'clock when he suddenly rose to his feet.

"Come along," came his gruff voice. "Carter knows where we are going. Moulton's men are on the shore

and he does not look for any trouble. We'll watch from Hurd's boathouse. Come along."

Going from the piazza, they crossed the driveway, then went over the lawn to the shore. Though it was very dark, they reached the sea wall without trouble, and dropped down on the pebbled shore. Keeping close to the water's edge, they followed the curving shore for about two hundred yards. Then they came to a boathouse.

It was a combination boathouse and wharf, stretching, a dark shadow, out into the lake. Climbing up on the shaky boards, they felt their way to the end of the boathouse, then paused. Ahead of them, the dock continued for about ten feet. Dimly they could observe the water, its surface unbroken by a swell. Overhead, one star was trying to pierce a screen of clouds, only to give up the contest almost as soon as it was begun.

There was nothing to do but wait. Just what they were waiting for Manners could not tell. A bench would have been welcomed, but there was none on the wharf. Sitting down, he let his legs dangle above the water. The air was warm and, though there was no breeze, he felt sure there was a storm coming. Carter and Rogan had followed his example, and he could make out their dim figures beside him. Near the shore there came the sound of a fish breaking water, and the splash caused him to give a little start.

He was nervous, and the darkness did not improve the feeling. Far down on the shore could be seen the lights of a cottage settlement and, at the very end of

the peninsula, was a beach fire. Though it was miles away, the red spot of flame held his gaze for some time. Then he turned to look in the direction of Canada. Thirty miles across the lake was land, and Freeman's motor boat ought to make the trip in forty minutes at the most.

How long they sat on the wharf they never knew, though later he decided it was almost an hour. Long before it was over, the waiting became monotonous. It would have been very easy to drop off to sleep; once or twice he caught himself yawning. It was Carter's ears which first heard the faint noise of a motor far out on the lake, his voice which called their attention to the sound.

Out on the water was a motor boat, so far away that the sound vanished several times before they were able to distinguish it. Every second it grew louder, until it became a faint steady roar. The boat was carrying no lights even though its speed was terrific. As it came closer to the shore, they scrambled to their feet, to press close against the side of the boathouse. As they did so, the darkness was split by the long narrow rays of the searchlight.

The boat had cut down its speed and was coming close to the shore. The light played over the beach, traveling up the high bank, sweeping back and forth in a searching fashion. As it rested for a second upon the wharf, only the fact that they were pressed close against the boathouse saved them from discovery. For a second it faltered over the end of the wharf, then

danced away in a sweeping curve to a halt upon Freeman's boathouse.

The boat was almost at the shore. They heard the engine being cut off, as there came a sudden silence. For the time being they dared not move from their position, though they could picture what was happening at the other boathouse. The speed boat was drifting into the wharf; by now it must have bumped against the boards. Eagerly they listened; then suddenly came a long, shrill whistle.

It rose for a moment upon the still air, dying away only to be repeated. Silence fell, broken by a sudden cry. It was a startled cry, ringing out as a shot broke the silence. At the sound of the gun, they started to run along the side of the wharf. As they reached the shore, they gave one quick look up the beach. Two hundred feet away was the other boathouse. Flashlights played over a long, white motor boat; they could glimpse the figures of struggling men, could hear the sound of angry voices.

With Carter in the lead, they ran down the rocky beach. Near the boathouse a man stepped out of the darkness to throw a flashlight over their faces. A short, hurried word from Carter, and he allowed them to pass. Courtesy made them wait by the wharf until Rogan reached their side; then all climbed on the structure and started towards the men they could glimpse beyond the boathouse.

They found two men pressed close against the side of the building. In front of them stood three others.

The short, heavy figure, holding a gun, Manners recognized at a glance. The others must be two of Moulton's men. His gaze swept over to a defiant figure leaning against the boathouse. Though he must have been startled by his arrest yet Freeman was taking it in good spirits. Leaning against the rough boards, he lighted a cigarette; then, with a shrug of his shoulders, broke into a sneering laugh. What he said they could not hear, but they saw a flush sweep over Moulton's face, followed by a gesture of his hand. As Freeman went past them, with a government man on each side, he hurled a sneering remark in the chief's face.

Going to the end of the dock, they examined the long, white motor boat. Moulton was going over it, and his examination would take a long time. They watched him until he pulled out four long packages, which had been hidden under the floor boards. As the wrappings were torn aside, and a row of small bottles appeared, Carter whispered to Manners that they need not wait any longer. But they did linger until Moulton opened one of the bottles and poured a stream of white crystals into the palm of his hand.

The walk over to the dark shore was a silent one. Even after they had climbed the sea wall and started across the lawn to the house, no one spoke. Manners and Rogan felt no desire to talk, and Carter was so far ahead of them that, if he had been moved to speech, the conversation would have been a monologue. As to what they had seen in the boat no one felt it was necessary to say a word. Moulton had found four

packages containing little bottles. They had seen him pour into his palm a trickling mass of white crystals. They knew then what had been in the bottles. They had seen cocaine before.

CHAPTER XVIII

THERE were four men in Manners' long living room and, in a sense, all were uneasy. Every light had been turned on and the glare had caused the prints upon the wall to become a mass of meaningless lines. Though it was a large room, the men were widely separated. By the door leading to the hall, his red round face filled with nervousness, sat the police chief. Close to the desk was Manners, while across from him, and some few feet away from Doctor Remington, sat Carter.

From the moment they had entered the room, Carter had not liked the feeling of suspense which was present. He had been startled by the sight of the doctor, for he had not known Manners knew the man well enough to invite him to his house. The greetings had been a little short, and it was then that Carter had decided he did not like the atmosphere in the room. Not only was he uneasy himself, filled with a strange, warning sense of danger, but he could tell that the others were also ill at ease.

For a few moments the conversation was general, though it was Manners who did most of the talking. As he watched his friend's face, Carter came to the conclusion that most of the talk was forced. A glance showed that Rogan was uneasy, for the man was sitting on the very edge of his chair, a perfect picture of unrest. Even the doctor appeared troubled, for the

round face kept flushing, and if it were possible, the little blonde mustache appeared to droop. Not only was it a nervous group, but Carter decided that it was also a suspicious one.

There came a silence lasting so long that Carter felt that, unless he broke it, he would scream. Rising, he went to the desk for cigars, then asked if any one cared to smoke. The quick manner in which his suggestion was refused only increased the wonder in his mind. As he went back to his chair, his lips shut in a tight line. Something was wrong, but what he did not know. His keen eyes swept over the three uneasy faces, then he began to study a picture upon the wall. For some reason it had turned into the gloomiest party of the year.

It was Rogan who broke the silence. There came a half cough, and the undertone in his voice seemed to say that he did not care to speak. He said:

"We just saw Tommy Freeman being picked up by some government men. They nabbed him for trying to bring in dope from Canada."

A startled look swept over the doctor's face. He gave the chief a quick glance, and his lips opened as if he intended to speak; then, as though thinking better of what he would have said, his mouth went shut. Silence came, broken at last by a question from Manners:

"Doctor, how did you ever happen to make such a bad mistake when you made your diagnosis of those two deaths?"

A rather imperative question, Carter thought. He saw the doctor's face flush red; then his cheeks became

white. A nervous hand went up to smooth a blue tie. Then with a gesture, he shook his head.

"I presume it was the excitement and the darkness, added to the fact that I was nervous. Then, of course, a person who dies from a stroke looks almost as he would if he died from curare."

"I thought it was very odd you made that mistake," was the reply.

There was such a curious undertone in Manner's voice that Carter wondered what was coming. He knew that his friend was uneasy, and he waited for the next words. When they came they were so low that it was difficult to hear what he was saying:

"Of course, with curare, a person simply chokes to death. Apoplexy, a stroke, is another thing. Though they may look almost alike, a good doctor ought not to make a mistake. It was a good thing the chief ordered an autopsy, or else it never would have been known that the two were poisoned."

Carter did not blame the doctor for jumping to his feet. It was an insulting speech, not at all like Manners. Fear and rage were playing over the doctor's face. Carter saw him glance at Manners, noticed that in a second he turned away. Then, in a voice which shook with passion, Remington wanted to know what had been meant by the words. Starting across the floor for the door, he paused in front of Rogan.

"I certainly did not come here to be insulted," he said, in a choked voice. "Have you any more questions to ask me before I leave?"

There had been a sneer in the last words, but the

tone did not appear to bother Manners. Carter noticed that Rogan's hand was creeping into a pocket, knew that the doctor was watching the motion. Then came Manners' voice again, low and commanding, and what he asked caused Carter to half leap from his chair.

"There is one thing we would like to know Doctor. Just why did you kill Mrs. Russell and Doctor Wood?"

There fell a silence over the room. Upon the doctor's face was an expression which Carter would never be able to describe. Fear and rage mingled with something that seemed to give a look into a horror-stricken soul. For a moment he stood swaying back and forth, then slowly walked across the floor. As he dropped down into the chair, he sighed.

"Why—why did you ask that?" he asked in a protesting tone.

"Because we know all about it, Doctor. We know that Mrs. Russell was in the minister's study, Saturday evening. We know she told him that you were mixed up with Freeman in running drugs from Canada. We can prove she went to Freeman's house that night, and that you were having dinner with him. She was very angry, and he took her into his library and closed the door. While they were there you left the table and hurried out to her car. You put a little rubber cap over her horn, and through the cap was a needle, its point covered with curare. Are you going to deny those facts?"

"You can never prove it," was the low reply.

Slowly rising, Manners walked to the desk and pulled open a drawer. The searching hand came out,

with what Carter first thought was a record of an old-fashioned phonograph. He observed the thoughtful look it received, noticed how carefully Manners carried it in his hand.

"You see this dictaphone record," he said, addressing Remington. "When Mrs. Russell left the study, the minister dictated a letter upon this roll, a letter to you. In it he repeated most of what she told him, and asked what you had to say in your own defence. We can prove that you took the box of curare which vanished from the museum. We know you were the first one in church Sunday morning. Freeman's colored man has talked, and he will talk, himself, later. Then there is the fact that you made a false diagnosis in the two deaths. And there are other things."

Carter's first thought was that his friend had suddenly lost his mind. A glance showed that, though Rogan was uneasy, yet the charge had not been a surprise. Yet he could hardly believe that Manners was telling the truth. So far as Carter knew, there was not a single fact to bear out the charges, but the dictaphone record startled him, even if he did realize one thing. From his long experience in criminal trials, he knew that, though Manners had built up a good case, yet in no sense had he proved that the doctor was guilty.

The physician had sunk far down in his chair, and his head was buried in his hands. As the words came hurrying from Manners' lips, the short stout body trembled. In the silence which came he suddenly raised his head. His face was ashen white, the only spark of

color being the uncanny glowing of his eyes. As his gaze swept over the three men, Carter thought he had never seen such a helpless expression upon a person's face. Suddenly he spoke, the voice so low that they could barely hear him:

"Yes—I—killed them—both of them."

An exclamation leaped from Rogan's lips. Manners' eyes grew very grave, and a sorrowful expression passed across his face. As he turned to walk back to his chair, there was no triumph in his heart. Instead, he felt a deep pity for the crushed figure of the doctor. He had been correct in his viewpoint, but he was wondering how a police chief could, day after day, watch the broken lives which must pass through a police station.

The face of the doctor had grown white, then flushed red. The hands were clenched until the knuckles showed a line of white. For a moment he tried to speak and, when the words would not come, slowly shook his head. But when he did speak, a little strength had returned to the low voice.

"I—killed them—fool that I was. A long time ago—several years—I got mixed up with Freeman. My practice was slipping; my speculations had gone wrong; I needed money. He told me one night he knew where drugs could be secured in Canada, suggested that I go in with him, and we run them over. In the end I consented, though my heart was never in the thing."

The voice died away for a moment, as the doctor cast a hopeless glance at the floor. Then he continued:

"Freeman was always running round with that

woman. He even let her run the boat across the lake—let her bring in the drugs. I think he paid her well. I know I did. When she found out I was mixed up in the thing, she wanted money, wanted it all the time, said if I did not come across she would tell. I was always afraid of being exposed. Where was I? Oh yes. Freeman got tired of her and several weeks ago told her he was through. She came to the office, demanding money, and that I should make him take her back. I wanted to quit myself; for, after all, I only sailed over to Canada three times. No one would ever suspect me. You see, there was something in Freeman's past which made him afraid to go often. Well, she wanted money, told me that unless I made Freeman take her back she would make trouble. I guess it was then I first thought of killing her—"

The weary voice vanished, as he leaned back in the chair. Perspiration was running like a stream across the flushed face. Taking a handkerchief from his pocket, he rolled it between his palms. Then he spoke again:

"Of course—murder is a terrible thing. You—you have no rest, no peace, no sleep after committing one—"

A shudder ran through him as he paused. Then again came the low voice:

"I knew there was a small box of curare in the museum, though I guess everyone else in the city had forgotten about the gift of South American curios. I asked one day where they kept the box, and the girl showed me. Later I managed to get into the closet and

take the poison. I replaced the box by a bit of lead. I must have been out of my mind—crazy—I guess I was—but I figured out a hundred ways to poison that woman. Day after day she came to the office. Money—money—was her constant cry. I gave her all I had to spare; it was not enough. ‘More,’ she said, ‘or I will tell.’ Nights, I killed her over and over again in my mind.

“Then came last Saturday night. I was having dinner with Freeman. The irony of it all is that he had me out to his house to tell me there was to be no more drug running. His friends in Canada were scared, and he was to make one more trip; then it was over. While we were at dinner, the woman rushed into the dining room and made a scene. She yelled and raved so much that, in the end, he took her into his office. I sat and listened for a few moments; then something drove me out of the house. I took a rubber cap off a medicine bottle, thrust a broken end of a hypodermic needle through it, smeared the needle again and again with curare, and placed it over the button of the horn. She would have to sound that horn before reaching the city, and the needle would enter her flesh. I got back to the table before they came out of the library—and—”

There came a long hopeless sigh of despair, and he slowly shook his head.

“It was too late. She came suddenly rushing out of the library, did not even have her raincoat on. In her hand was a book. Before she could be prevented, she had rushed from the house and we heard her drive away. And then I heard that I was too late. Freeman

told me of her visit to Wood, and I knew it was over—”

Manners started to speak only to be stopped by the doctor.

“Freeman had nothing to do with the murders. No doubt he has an idea I am the guilty person, but that’s all. He told me what the woman had said in the library, how she boasted of her visit to Wood, how she had told him what we had done. That did not worry Freeman very much. He said he could take care of the girl, and did not care what the minister thought. But I knew Wood. First he would tell me what he had heard, next the police. The publicity would ruin me. We talked over an hour, and Freeman said he would drive into town with me, see the woman and get back the book she had stolen. She had snatched up the notebook which contained the names of various drug runners in other cities, and had dashed from the room. So we started, and as we came out of the driveway we saw the cars on the road. He dropped out and I drove along—”

The weary voice was becoming very low, and the tone was a flat monotone, without expression or inflection, but it went on:

“When I saw the chief in the road, I was very startled, but said she died from a stroke, thinking that might get by. What caused me to kill the minister? Oh—I guess it was fear—fear of exposure. I went to church very early, unscrewed the button on the leg of the desk, and replaced it by another, by one which I had filed to a sharp point and covered with poison. I

knew he would hit it with his hand. Later I made the same diagnosis—a stroke—”

His hand fumbled in a pocket for a second, and when he spoke he turned to Manners. There was an appealing note in his voice:

“I ran into you at both places. I don’t understand how you put it all together. I—I have had no rest or peace since they took place. But—I have no feeling against you, Professor. In a sense—I am glad it is all over. For the first time in many hours, I feel a little peace. It’s a terrible thing I have done—though I have no regrets about the woman—she was a useless bit of humanity. But when I killed the minister—I did a horrible deed. But, fool that I was, I was afraid. But I have no feelings toward you Professor—none at all”—

A trembling hand raised a faltering handkerchief to his face and he wiped his brow. No one spoke—if their life had depended upon it, they could not have spoken. Carter raised his eyes to glance over at the silent figure in the chair. Something caused him to catch his breath suddenly, then he rose and went over to the chair. They saw him look at the bent head, watched him lift a still hand, then he turned. As his grave glance rested upon them, he nodded, and his low voice told what they already knew:

“Dead. Potassium cyanid. And I am glad.”

It was two hours later when they reëntered the room. Silently Rogan and Carter sank down into chairs and watched Manners go out to the kitchen. When he returned, they quite approved of the Scotch he poured

into their glasses, though it was Carter's suggestion that the drink ought to be doubled. Not until a second drink had been poured did anyone speak, and it was Carter who broke the silence.

"None of us perhaps, feel like talking over this affair," he said. "Yet there are several things which I would like to know. I doubt if Manners will ever feel over cheerful over what he pulled off tonight though it had to be done. But I still don't see how he managed to get all his facts together."

For the last two hours Manners had been fighting a battle with his conscience. It was a battle fated to remain unwon. Crime must be punished; people who kill must be brought to justice; Remington had confessed, and taken the best way out of the situation, but the confession had been forced by a trick, and Manners was not very proud over how it had been done. If he could have managed it, the manner in which he had secured the confession would have remained a secret; but he knew he must speak.

"In one sense there never were any facts," was his grave retort. Not wishing to hear any remarks, he hurried on:

"All my suspicions came to a head today. First there was the question of the time element in the death of the woman. Five minutes after the poison entered her blood, she would have found it impossible to drive. Then came the matter of coincidence, and there were several which appeared rather odd. Was it just a coincidence that Remington happened to be on hand

shortly after each person was killed? Then the fact that he made a wrong diagnosis bothered me. At first glance one might mistake a death from poisoning by curare for a stroke. But Remington must have been a fairly good doctor. In the darkness he could have made a mistake about the woman's death—but he ought not to have made the same mistake when he signed the certificate for the minister. Either he was a very poor doctor—or—he had made the mistake purposely. When he went to church Sunday morning, it was his first appearance in the building for many a long week. He was no churchgoer, and his being present that particular morning was another odd coincidence—”

“That’s all right,” broke in Carter. “It shows good reasoning on your part, but if it had not been for that dictaphone record, you would have got nowhere at all—”

“There was nothing on the record, George,” said Manners. “In fact the record I pulled out of the drawer had never been used at all—”

“You mean to tell us—”

“I mean this. After all, I am presumed to be a psychologist. I tried to figure out what Wood must have done after Mrs. Russell left the study. He dismissed his secretary and was alone. The story he had heard caused him to say his faith in human nature was shattered. That one remark caused me to doubt if Freeman could be the murderer. To lose your faith in human nature, you must have your faith destroyed in someone you have known well—some individual who held a

high place in your thoughts. Freeman did not fit into that picture, for I doubted if the minister even knew him very well."

He paused to light a cigarette, his first smoke in many hours.

"I concluded the minister would react as he always did. He was going away in a few days, but that would not change his habits. We always react according to the habit formulas we have formed. Maybe he tried to get Remington on the phone—he would have avoided the whole sorry mess if he had succeeded. I thought he might have dictated a letter upon the dictaphone—evidently he did not. On the desk had been a memorandum pad. While the woman had talked, he had played with a pencil, and his unconscious fingers had drawn a little design upon the pad. We all do the same thing; you do it yourself. But he had also written something else upon that pad. Three times he had put down a name—that of William Remington. The most significant fact about that name was that he had drawn a line through it, his sub-conscious wish that he might wipe out the story he had heard as easily as he could destroy the written name. It was that which started me after Remington."

"You never thought of him before?"

"I thought of everyone, and reached no conclusions. There was so little to go on."

"How did you find out about that box of curare being missing at the museum?" was Rogan's question.

They were told that that was an accident, but when

he telephoned, the girl remembered showing the box to the doctor. He was the only person who had ever asked to see it. Manners had not known that the doctor had been having dinner with Freeman that night the woman was murdered. One fact, however, seemed very clear. The first time the woman's hand went banging down on the button of her horn, her fate was sealed. She must have come down the driveway, for, if she had driven around the mile of curves, the car would not have been found where it was.

"You dropped Hurd out of the picture—"

Manners nodded, saying that, despite the foolish letters, the merchant had never fitted into the crimes. Repressed, bigoted fanatic that he was, his type did not as a rule commit murder. Yet the woman must have come from Hurd's house or from Freeman's. She would blow her horn just as she was about to drive out on the road. He had suspected the broker for a while, but Freeman had no particular reason to kill the minister. His word would be as good as the clergyman's, if any story was told. Also the murderer had been very familiar with the church study, and the minister's habits regarding the morning service. So far as he knew, Freeman had never entered the building.

Since five o'clock he had suspected the doctor. There was little to go upon, though the wrong diagnoses, the name on the pad seemed to point one way. Then the girl at the museum had said that Remington had asked to see the box of curare. He thought of the dictaphone records, wondered if the man might break down and

confess; he would be very nervous, his emotions almost at a breaking point. So, when the doctor had suddenly confessed, he had not been surprised.

"We had a hint at the very start," he added. "You remember, Rogan, that the very first thing Remington did, when he came out of his car that night, was to tell us he had been out to dinner. He started to say one name, that of Freeman, then changed it. We had a hint there, if we had only remembered it."

"I had another, but did not have brains enough to know it," came the chief's gloomy confession. "Freeman kept running into the office, asking if we had discovered any clues. He was trying to find out if the red book had been turned in. When I kept saying 'No,' he knew you must still have it, no doubt had forgotten it was in your pocket. We never will be able to fasten that attempt to kill you in the garage on him; but it's certain he was the man. The breaking into your house was to secure the book. But I don't see that thousand dollars reward he offered."

"That goes to Manners, and we can all have a trip on it," was Carter's chuckle.

"It goes to Rogan, or the police fund," was the quick retort. "I don't figure in this publicity at all. Rogan gets it all. But the reward was a gesture, an impulsive one. He might have feared it would be discovered that he knew the woman well; it would not have been overlooked very long. So he offered the reward."

In the silence which came, Carter rose from the chair and walked over to the table. Pouring himself a drink,

he cocked a questioning eye at the chief. As he took the glass across to his chair, he slapped the big man on the shoulder. For the first time in hours, his voice had a cheerful ring.

"Harley," he said, "don't get all puffed up because you solved the murders. After all, it was our noble chief here who is responsible for the case being settled. If it had not been for Rogan—?"

"Trying to kid me," came the growling voice. "Hell, if he hadn't pulled it off, I was out of a job."

"Not at all, Chief, not at all. After all, who was it got all gloomed up over Hurd's silly letters? Who got such a gloom that on a rainy night he had to run out and see Manners? You did. And if you had not wandered out here that night, you never would have discovered the woman dead in the car. Remington would have come along, given a death certificate, and no one would have ever had any suspicion things were not right. I give you a toast." He paused to drain his glass, then held it high in the air. "To the best aid a police chief has—a good hunch. It was a hunch that got Rogan started over the letters. What caused an inquest? The fact that Rogan had a hunch. Who refused to allow two doctors to say there was nothing wrong in the woman's death? Rogan with a hunch. I suppose if we went back far enough, the two murders were solved because Hurd wrote some foolish letters, but, if Rogan had not got scared over four words, no one would have known a murder had been committed. Four words scared the chief, caused him to have a hunch that something was wrong—"

The chief's face flushed very red, as he growled out: "You are crazy. What four words did I get scared over?"

"You were scared, Rogan. Don't be modest and deny it. And it was a darned good thing you were."

"What four words?" the chief insisted.

"You're not going to tell us you have forgotten so soon," was the laughing retort. "Have you forgotten the letters? Don't you remember that phrase about what was hanging over the city?"

Violent was the protesting shake of the chief's head. At the gesture, Carter sighed, as if shocked by Rogan's lack of memory. Then he laughed as he threw out his hands in a sweeping gesture and quoted:

"The shadow of evil."

THE END



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